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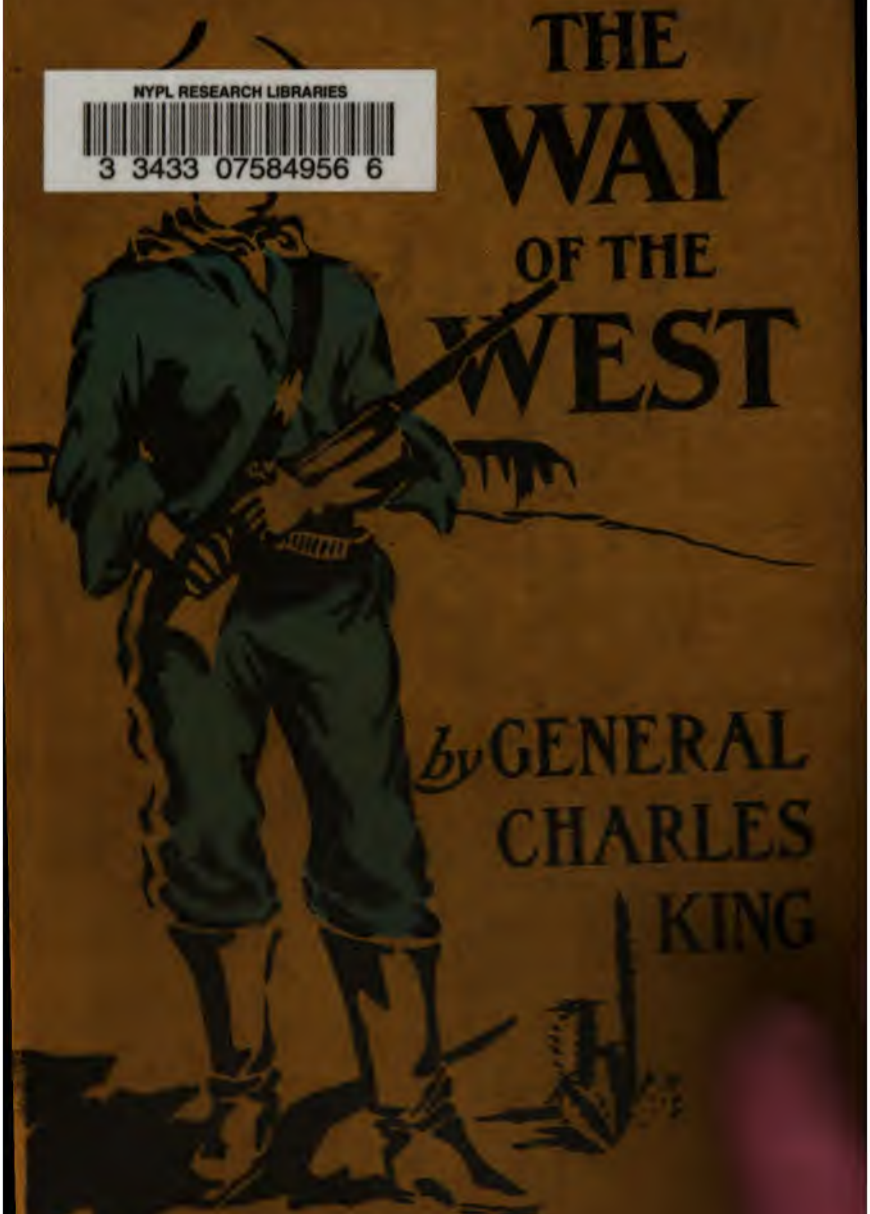
THE WAY OF THE WEST

by GENERAL CHARLES KING



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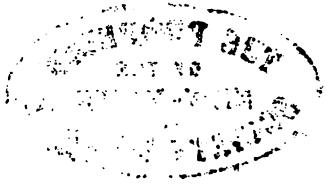

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Without a word he sent his left fist square to the jaw.—*Page 10.*

THE WAY OF THE WEST

BY

GENERAL CHARLES KING

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THE WAY OF THE WEST.

CHAPTER I.

The stage had stopped at four in the morning and the driver was swearing again. Giving the reins to a drowsy companion, he had dropped successively from the box to the step, from step to tire, from tire to hub and from hub to the hard prairie sod, emphasizing each section of his descent with progressive profanity, and this, too, with ladies aboard. Two of the "insides" woke up with a shudder, due partly to the chill of the dawn and partly to the heat of the driver's expletives. Two others of the insides were already awake,—one a young mother, nestling a baby girl in her weary arms; one a young officer in heavy overcoat who had squeezed within at the last station, when it was too dark to see his fellow passengers. Now, in the pallid, sickly light of the coming morning, and to the jarring accompa-

niment of the driver's sulphurous blasphemy, he for the first time saw his nearest neighbor's wan yet winsome face, and one quick glance was enough.

Kicking open the door, he dropped lightly to the ground. The driver was wielding a monkey wrench at the moment and, bending over the off fore wheel, was hammering at the loosened tire. He glanced up spitefully as the lieutenant spoke; the hammer-head did likewise and whacked the worn old thorough-brace a blow that started the dust of years from every seam. It made the driver even madder, and his answer to the officer's muttered "Easy there, Cassidy. Lady inside," was a malevolent glare and a growl of malediction.

"What business have they to send a man out with such a damned old rattle-trap as this?" he raged. "It's been on the line since Denver wore diapers. It's done up with dry rot till a nail won't hold, and here I'm expected to land this load at Big Bend before six o'clock. Think I can limp there on three wheels?"

It did look dubious. The stage was a transferred veteran of the Smoky Hill route, worn with years of hard usage, pierced with arrow

and bullet, patched with hide and hickory, yet drafted into service at sudden emergency—serious trouble at the camp of the Rock Island Engineers on the Lancewood, the stamping ground of the buffalo, the lair of the coyote, the hunting field of the dreaded Cheyenne, yet even at that early day invaded by the advance guard of a road that was destined to open the West. From the frontier forts, from Lyon, Wallace and Hays, scattered detachments of cavalry and hard-footing infantry had been sent to the scene, and were now scouting the rolling uplands and the sequestered valleys of the eastern water-shed of the Rockies, chasing a foe that could run two miles to their one. A strong guard had been left at the Lancewood. Surgeons and stewards were attending the wounded, for the surveyors had made valiant fight, and, from her peaceful home in Illinois, a young wife and mother, with her babe at her breast, had hastened by rail as far as she could go, and thence by this ramshackle stage, heedless of peril or discomfort, eager only to reach the man in whom her life was centered—Don McAlister, Civil Engineer, head of the surveying party, shot

through both thighs in savage fight, and little expected to live.

With her, as fellow passengers, were the chaplain from Fort Pawnee, sent on after the command to aid in the care of the wounded, and an asthmatic veteran, hanging on to his rank in the hope of promotion before retirement, yet no more fit for the field than was the stage for the road. At least the major was pious, and, like his friend the chaplain, deeply pained at the driver's language. But these were men of thought, not action—the gentle priest in the garb of the army, the grizzled officer in the grasp of bronchitis. They had been roused from their cat naps by the sudden halt of the stage and the storm of swear words. They breathed freer when young Emslie shed his top-coat and leaped to the ground.

"I—I really wish he might chastise him soundly," muttered the churchman.

"It would serve him right," answered the veteran—"and with a lady aboard, too;" he added, with propitiatory look at their silent neighbor.

She sat facing front on the rear seat of the

coach, absorbed in her little one and her own anxieties. That the driver should embellish his descriptives with many an oath was of little consequence as compared with the hint of delay. Not since leaving Kansas City had she received a word as to her husband's condition. The division superintendent of the railway had himself placed her in the stage at Mona, where she left the train, and had sent her on her way with a prayer that her husband might be no worse. Yet he hated to think of her going with no more formidable escort than this meek and reluctant pair, already seated. "You are safe from Indians, Mrs. McAlister," said he, reassuringly, "at least as far as the Antelope. After that, at any rate, you'll have soldiers to escort you," whereat the elderly major winced, but discreetly said no word.

But the superintendent shook his head as he turned away. The fifty miles to the Bend had been patrolled by cavalry day and night since Thunder Hawk's defiant outbreak. The road went winding over bald, breeze-swept waves of upland prairie, secure against sudden swoop of agile foe. The danger lay in the crossing of certain deep and tortuous ravines, where

the melting snows of centuries had worn their way to the mighty drain of the continent, and thence to the summer sea. One after another, at oddly regular intervals, the stage road twisted down into the gravelly depths of the Wolf, the Antelope and Thunder Creeks before sweeping into the wider and more open valley of the Lancewood. Wolf Creek crossing, the stage had passed in safety at one o'clock in the morning, ten miles out from the railway. A guard of infantrymen was camped at the stream, the white tents glimmering in the light of the little watch fire, and there a vigilant sergeant reported "All quiet, but no news from Lancewood." At Antelope an entire troop of cavalry was in bivouac when, toward three o'clock, with brake hard set, rasping and squealing on rusty tire and racking nerves, the stage came bumping and sliding down the grade, and the bay chargers of the command, hoppled securely against stampede and just beginning to rouse up from their comforting snooze to breakfast on the dew-laden buffalo grass, stared mild disapprobation at the shambling quartette of Missouri mules, the driver's alternate pride and provocation. It was here

that Mr. Emslie, as he would be known in the Army, and Lieutenant Emslie, as he was referred to out of it, left his comrade subaltern, Jake Ransom, to look after matters in the neighborhood, left his pet horse, Kaiser, and, obedient to his orders, proceeded to "proceed by stage to the Lancewood," there to report in person to Lieutenant-Colonel Briggs, commanding the field column, and both Emslie and Ransom knew what it meant. "Black Bill," the field officer referred to, had embarrassing questions to ask that Emslie must answer to his satisfaction, or possibly stand court-martial.

A good soldier was Emslie, an army-bred boy who had won his spurs at Summit Springs, and "fleshed his maiden sword" in the dash on Red Dog's savage band the previous year, yet Emslie had his limitations. He didn't like Black Bill, who in turn had his likes and dislikes. Emslie had high hopes and ideals and sense of duty, yet his sense of duty had not been so high as to outweigh his sense of mercy, and, when charged with the safekeeping of a young soldier accused of a serious crime and ordered turned over to the civil authorities,

Mr. Emslie had so far neglected precautions as not to lash his prisoner to the wagonwheel when bivouacked for the night at Rawson's Ranch. The prisoner had slipped his guards and got away, and, so was it said at Mona, Emslie had fathered the whole affair.

Perhaps it was because the driver knew the high spirited young fellow to be in hot water that he lapsed into cool,—even contemptuous,—disregard of Emslie's kindly caution, and when his mule quartette of a sudden set up a hideous braying, deliberately let drive the heavy wrench at the haunch of the nearmost and a volley of curses at the four. With uplifted leg and quivering flank, the stricken animal reeled against the other wheeler. The driver made a lunge for the reins, and supplemented the blow by a furious kick at the broad, round stomach. The startled child in the young mother's arms lifted up her little voice in protesting wail, as the roar of blasphemy went echoing down the ravine, and Emslie could stand it no longer. Without a word he sent his left fist square to the jaw of the raging "tough,"—thigh and shoulder muscles backing the powerful swing,—and the resounding

crack was followed instantly by the heavy thud of a burly body bringing up short on the hard, unyielding ground.

Raging indeed was Dan Cassidy, "Denver Dan," as he was known on the frontier, when he struggled half dazed to his feet, his hand groping for the revolver at his waist. Then down he went a second time, only to glare up into the dimly-seen, firmly-set features of his master. "Drop that, Dan," were the merciless words, "or you'll never curse again," and, with hate and fury in his heart, the bully held forth his empty hands and lay still and suppliant, Emslie's pistol leveled at his breast.

A sullen, conquered and revengeful man was the driver when, nearly two hours behind time and now with a half dozen troopers trotting alongside, the stage began the winding descent to the valley of the Lancewood, opposite Big Bend. The sun was well up over the interminable sweep of prairie, billowing away to the east and south. The northward horizon was dotted here and there by little knolls or "buttes," while, peeping over the rolling foothills far to the west, capped by fleecy clouds, yet sharply outlined against the sky, distant,

yet dazzling in their robes of spotless white, the peaks of the Rockies stood sentinel over broad leagues of glorious landscape,—"Old Pike" towering in their midst. Down in the depths of the wide and placid valley the Lancewood wound away in many a graceful sweep and curve, the grassy banks adorned in places with shadowy clumps of willow or cottonwood. Afar over on the opposite shore a faint column of bluish smoke soared straight to the cloudless zenith, losing itself in upper air, yet not until it had told to wary, watchful eyes the presence of the hated invader. Scattered as were the Cheyennes, never for a moment was their vigilance relaxed. Every move of man or beast about the far separated camps, or along the hard-beaten road, was instantly noted and signalled to the chiefs still lurking in fastnesses whither our cavalry could follow, only to find the tenants warned and gone.

What struck Emslie as strange was that, though some thirty troopers had been stationed at Big Bend as guards and escorts, only half a dozen horses could be seen grazing at the ford. "Had you any hint of their going out

on scout?" he called to the sergeant, riding jauntily alongside.

"Not a word, sir. We've been over toward the Wolf for two days, and not a sign of Indian have we seen. Not a courier's come through from camp."

"I'm sure we'll get news at the ford, though," said Emslie, to the young mother, in tones of gentle reassurance, "and if we don't, why, 'no news is good news,' you know, and it's only ten miles further on to camp."

Mrs. McAlister smiled gratefully, yet wearily. "I pray we may," she answered. "Now, do let me have Baby again. I'm sure she's tiring you," and her hands were outstretched for the child, now soundly, placidly sleeping on the broad blue shoulder in Emslie's clasping arms. The winner of the short and decisive set-to at dawn had long since insisted on relieving the wearied woman of her load, and Baby May had gone to him without a murmur of remonstrance. "Verily," said the chaplain, "you handle an infant or a bully with equal ease." Whereat Mr. Emslie blushed through the tan of his brave young face, but held Miss Baby the closer.

Long years of his life until sent to West Point, he had spent on the wide frontier, following the fortunes of his father's troop, and knowing little of any other world than that of the camp and the plains. Now the father he loved was in his honored grave, killed at the head of his division the last year of the great war, and it was Emslie's choice to return to duty once more in the West. For one thing he loved it, for another he could live at far less cost and so have all the more to send each month to the widowed mother in the States. It was no new thing to him to hush and soothe a nervous child to sleep. Time and again in his sturdy boyhood had he not had the care of a baby brother and a spoiled and petted younger sister? "Why, it's like old times," said he, "and she took to me right from the start, didn't you, May?" and the rosy, chubby baby face was brushed by the down of the boy moustache as Emslie bent his shapely, close-cropped head and kissed her.

And then Sergeant Dodge rode close to the window;—"Courier coming, Lieutenant," said he, and Mrs. McAlister's tired blue eyes lit up with eager hope one moment, then shad-

owed with dread. At rapid lope across the level bench in the valley below the horseman came. "It's Kearney, sir, of 'K' Troop," said Dodge. "I'd know his mount a mile away." And Kearney it proved to be.

"Tell the driver to haul up at the roadside. You've no objections, have you, Major?" said Emslie, suddenly remembering the rank of the elder officer who throughout the ride had not so much as ventured a hint to Cassidy.

"By no means, Mr. Emslie. He—er—he may have dispatches for me."

With sullen hate in his eyes, Denver Dan received the crisp order and with slow deliberation obeyed. The lieutenant had too many men at his back to warrant a word, even if his smarting, swollen jowl had not reminded him. In a moment the trooper came cantering up the road and at sight of Emslie's face drew rein:—

"What news from Lancewood, Kearney?"

"All safe, sir. Is Major Tennant here?" and he began fumbling at the strap of his saddle-bags. "I have orders for him, sir."

"This is the major," said Emslie, briefly.

"How are the wounded? How is Mr. McAlister?"

"The engineer, sir? He's coming round all right," whereat there went up a sob of praise and joy and thanksgiving from the heart of the little woman, listening in anxiety intense, almost intolerable. "They got the bullet out four days ago, and *he's* doin' first rate. Dr. Kent had him and two others brought over here to the Bend last evening—slid 'em up the valley on travois slick as could be—"

"What! Here?—Near us?" cried Mrs. McAlister, with dilated eyes.

"Yes, mum, right 'cross the ford where you see the smoke. The colonel's goin' to break camp and light out after the Indians, an' they thought the wounded would be safer here, where there's two dugouts."

"Then shall we push ahead, Major?" asked Emslie, as he at last surrendered Baby May to the eager arms outstretched for her. Something told him the overjoyed mother longed to clasp her little one to her breast and hide the tears now rolling down her cheeks—tears of joy and relief unspeakable. But the major

was slowly opening his dispatch and did not seem to hear. A look of perplexity and embarrassment crept over his wrinkled face as he read. Then, staring queerly over the page at Emslie, he gasped, open-mouthed a moment, and the lieutenant repeated the question.

"Oh—er—yes—by all means," he stammered, while the chaplain, forgetting for the moment his wordless song of praise, stared as queerly at the speaker. "Go on, Sergeant," shouted Emslie, and with sudden jerk the crazy vehicle started.

Ten minutes later, while the elder officers were in low-toned conference with the captain in command of the infantry guard, the doctor ushered a trembling little woman into a walled tent that stood close to the stream, and let fall the flap as she disappeared within. Emslie, once more holding Baby May, heard the sound of a low, joyous cry, a deep voice murmuring a beloved name, and looked down into the smiling, big-eyed face of his tiny charge with delight in his heart. The child was still nestling in his arms and tugging at the tarnished shoulder-strap, while stalwart soldiers looked on from the camp fire and softly

laughed. It was then that with serious, embarrassed visage the major, followed by the camp commander, came to Emslie's side. It was time for the stage to move on again.

"I cannot quite fathom this—er—Mr. Emslie, but the colonel says you are not to go with the column—you are to wait their return—here."

"Here?" exclaimed Emslie, pain and bewilderment in his bright, brave eyes. "Not when my troop's going! Surely you can't mean—in arrest?"

"Well—er—not in so many words, Mr. Emslie. But he holds that you,—at least he says that you—er—are suspected of connivance in the escape of Corporal Chester—Corporal Frank Chester," said the major, avoiding Emslie's indignant gaze. "And,—er—pending investigation, he has placed another officer in command of the troop until—until we get back. You will report to Captain Hone, here."

Even the soldiers lounging at the camp fire seemed to see that something had gone amiss. A strange picture, indeed, was this to their unaccustomed eyes. The bronzed lieutenant, tall, broad-shouldered and athletic, his face so

full of pain and dismay, the cooing, happy child in his arms, still toying with that tarnished strap; the two senior officers, one gray-haired and a bit tremulous, the other bearded, massive and soldierly, both evidently disturbed, and beyond them but a rod or so, the walled tent of the wounded engineer, at the entrance to which now stood the slender, graceful form of the young mother, who seemed in quest of her baby and her baby's big friend and protector, yet halted now, irresolute,—her soft blue eyes filled with apprehension at sight of Emslie's face. There was something, indeed, very much amiss, and the next words of the young soldier's showed it, as the old major turned suddenly away.

"But Major Tennant, this is a shame!—this is an outrage! I can clear myself in ten words, and am denied the opportunity. I *won't* be robbed of the right to lead my troop if we are going after Indians."

"Hush, Emslie!" spoke Captain Hone, in low, but commanding tone. "My orders are, if you make any trouble whatever, to put you in close arrest."

A dozen men saw the malignant grin on

the driver's face, as he cracked the long lash over the lead team and drove away, and two, at least,—Sergeant Dodge in saddle and Trooper Raymond on the box seat,—heard the words ground out between his strong clenching teeth. "Going after Indians, dash—dash him! If that's all he wants he needn't worry. They'll save him the trouble soon as they see the cavalry's out— Dash—dash the cowardly—"

"Shut up, Cassidy!" said Sergeant Dodge.

CHAPTER II.

An anxious day had dawned on Captain Hone's little command at the Big Bend of the Lancewood. Late on the previous afternoon the young surgeon had ridden in from the northeast, bringing with him, under a pitiably small escort, five more of the wounded, making nine in all to be cared for until they could be transported to the railway, and thence to Fort Wallace. Already Hone had had to part with the platoon of cavalry stationed with him for patrol and escort duty between Thunder Creek at the south and the main force ten miles to the northeast. Old "Black Bill" sent word he wanted every horseman, but left Corporal Metz and two troopers to serve as couriers in case of need. Then, at earliest day, the hot-headed old trooper had broken camp and launched out with a score of Pawnee scouts and three hundred stout dragoons in search of Thunder Hawk and his warriors.

"You've got forty men," he wrote to Hone, "and plenty of ammunition, even if some stray band does stir you up, but they won't. They're streaking for the sand hills now and only eager to get out of our way. As soon as you think it safe, move by easy stages to the railroad and get the wounded to Fort Wallace. We'll take care of the Indians."

With that and no further thought of Hone's people, the field commander had followed the big trail that led, undoubtedly, toward the far-away sand dunes of Nebraska, never heeding the faint pony tracks that, here and there where the ground was hard and high, branched out to right and left, and then in wide circuit doubled rearward and made for the foothills far behind him. A gallant leader was Briggs, a hard fighter in the civil war, but he knew about as much of Indian strategy as he did of Sanscrit, and Briggs was a man that couldn't be taught.

At sunset of this clear, sparkling, summer day he and his silent squadrons were halted nearly fifty miles away from Hone's lonely little post at the Bend, and Hone's lookouts had reported Indian smokes in half a dozen

different directions. Were the scattered Cheyennes gathering once again?

At nightfall this experienced campaigner took stock of his resources and responsibilities and this was the summing up:—Counting himself, his second lieutenant, Mr. Britton, the three troopers and some forty able-bodied "doughboys," a trio of teamsters and two frontier scouts, Hone had subject to his orders nearly half a hundred fighting men. With these could be reckoned Lieutenant Emslie, who would not be apt, Achilles-like, to sulk in his tent in time of trouble. Then there were two of the railway surveying party and one soldier whose wounds were slight, and who would probably serve valiantly at the butt of the guns in case of need. He had rations for six days, water in abundance, and seventy-five rounds of rifle ammunition per man. He had a good, gallant, tireless young surgeon, a reliable hospital steward, and above all, he had men he could swear by and who swore by him, men who, properly covered, could stand off a thousand Cheyennes as long as cartridges held out.

But there was the rub.

Down on that level bench, close to the stream, there was no cover from plunging fire from the bluffs a thousand yards away on the right hand, and barely eight hundred on the left. Two dugouts there were, those semi-subterranean plains forts, excavated from the soft earth of the flats, and walled and roofed with sod, but these were barely big enough to hold his wounded—the wounded already sent to him. It might be possible, also, to shelter some of his people under the bank, but this could not protect them from flying bullets from the south and southeast. Then Mrs. McAlister and that winsome mite of a May, the baby girl who already had won the hearts of half the command—they must be guarded and sheltered at all hazards, and Hone's somber eyes, as the sun went down, searched the skyline far and near for sign of possible foe, and his heart throbbed with thoughts of his own loved ones in the safe and distant East. Was it strange that the soldier prayed for wisdom that he might neglect no precaution—that God might guard them here in their isolation?

If it were only himself and his men, it might all be different,—they so welcomed the

chance of a brush with the Sioux or Cheyenne and so seldom got it, save at almost impossible range,—but with twilight came still further complication in the shape of Denver Dan and his stage, the old major, condemned by Black Bill as too old by far to follow the chase, the chaplain, condemned by that condemnatory commander on general principles, and two semi-invalided soldiers sent back for treatment. These, with two wagons bringing surplus commissary stores, had plodded the ten miles up stream with an escort that swore every step of the way, and that turned about the moment their mounts had had grain and the men had coffee, and rode off into the night intent on catching Black Bill or the very devil, and possibly both, with the following day. This made four more non-combatants to feed and care for. Cassidy, the driver, could be counted on, probably, to bear a hand. Of this there was no reasonable doubt. Drink and gamble, bully and swear as most of them would, there was seldom a plainsman who wasn't game when it came to an Indian fight.

However, Hone now had three government

wagons, and what was left of the old Smoky Hill stage, for towers in his little line of defense. These he had hauled into a rude semicircle at intervals of some thirty feet, enclosing the two dugouts. Intrenching tools, save the one spade to each wagon, there were none in those days, but willing hands had been at work. Tin cans, plates, cracker box boards, and even bayonets had been utilized, and by dark enough earth had been scooped up and tossed to the front to make a reasonable shelter for soldiers lying down. The cook fire was rekindled under the bank and close to the stream. The mules were securely hoppled as they grazed. The three troopers, having abundant grain for their mounts, had decided it safer to "lariat" them in the cottonwoods close to the water rather than trust them on the better grass out on "the bench." If Indians should rush the bottom in the darkness in hopes of stampeding the stock, the chances for saving the horses were far better in the little clump of timber.

Then as the slow twilight settled down, the day pickets slipped back from the crests where they had lain for long watchful hours, and new

night posts, three hundred yards from the line, were planted along the stream, and on each side out in the open prairie. There, far removed from the murmur of the camp, the watchers could not fail to hear the hollow beat of pony hoofs upon the resounding sod should mounted Indians venture into the valley, and, giving timely warning of the coming of any considerable force, could yet slip back to the shelter of the corral.

Reasonably content with his dispositions was Hone, as the early night wore on, and his hardy men, belted for business, and each with ready rifle by his side, lay down in their shallow trenches to rest. No fear of their losing heart or nerve; only—he wished the wounded, some of whom still moaned in fever, could have been sent direct to the railway. He wished that blessed old major had been left at the post. He had almost wished that "Holy Joe," the chaplain, had stayed at home until that mild-mannered ecclesiastic surprised him by asking if a spare rifle could be had, and a place on the line. "Shake!" said Hone, extending his hand. "You shall have both, chaplain, if it comes to a pinch. Meantime you can help me

looking after the wounded, and that blessed little woman yonder."

"She needs no looking after," said the chaplain, with a glance toward the McAlisters' tent, where, with Baby May in her lap, the mother sat in the dim firelight, crooning her child to sleep. There, too, stood young Emslie, just coming out from a brief word with the wounded surveyor, and Hone's bearded face took on a look of genuine sympathy, as he gazed.

"Did you have a chance to speak to Colonel Briggs in his behalf?" he asked of the chaplain.

"A chance, yes; but that was all. The colonel somewhat rudely refused to discuss the matter."

"Well," said Hone, rising from his campstool as Major Tennant slowly joined them, his gray head bent, his hands clasped behind his back, "you know as well as I do that turning that young corporal over to the civil authorities of a frontier railway town meant nothing less than giving him up to a gang of toughs and gamblers,—the mates of the man he shot, as I believe, in self defense. Briggs

is all for law and order when it isn't one of his own men that's wanted. You know that, chaplain, if I *do* say it."

The chaplain smiled discreetly, but said nothing. Major Tennant, not sorry to hear his younger superior assailed, looked up with a reviving interest in life. His attitude had been that of dejection.

"What were the circumstances?" benignantly asked he of the captain.

"Simply these," said Hone. "Young Chester, with a comrade, wandered into Mona from the summer camp, and foolishly began betting at a faro outfit. He says, and I believe him, he plainly saw the dealer cheating,—accused him of it,—demanded the return of their money, and was set upon by the gang, one of whom he shot while they had him down, kicking him into pulp. The sound of the shot brought a dozen troopers out, and they saved him, but the gambler died of the wound. The coroner's jury declared Chester the murderer, the sheriff demanded his surrender, and Black Bill ordered it,—ordered Emslie to take Chester into Mona, and turn him over. My men say that it meant nothing less than a lynching bee,

and Chester begged hard, and so did Emslie, I'm told, but to no purpose. I haven't a doubt the men helped Chester to escape. The trouble is that now he's rated a deserter,—and he was a young fellow with good connections—good prospects—"

But Hone broke off short. "What do you want, Cassidy?" he sharply asked, of a slouching, shadowy form, hanging irresolute within earshot. All three officers turned and looked at the burly figure half way between them and where, but a few minutes before, Mrs. McAlister had been seated in the gloaming in front of her husband's tent. A dim light burned within the canvas and the murmur of voices came from the open entrance. The doctor was there with the young wife and bending over the wounded man. Then where was Baby May? It seemed to flash all of a sudden on Hone that it was Emslie the driver was dogging and watching, for, tall and dim, slowly pacing up and down, the athletic form of the young soldier could just be seen, the little one once more pillowed in his arms.

At the sudden hail Cassidy started visibly, then, before he spoke, turned slowly toward

the commander. There, too, was no love lost, for Hone had long since believed him to be "hand in glove" with Mona's choicest gang of gamblers, and the driver knew it.

"I was thinking of putting my mules across the creek, 'f you had no objection, Cap."

"Then why didn't you come and ask instead of hanging around out there?"

"Didn't know just where you were till I heard voices. You was speakin' 'bout Chester,—him that shot Jim Farrell," and with the assurance of a man who thinks he has news worth the telling, Cassidy lounged forward, hands in his pockets and hat on the back of his bullet head. "If the lieutenant hadn't turned him loose that feller might have been free and acquitted by this time. Now he's a fugitive from justice, with Farrell's wife and a dozen friends sworn to run him down. He ain't the only one they'll square with—either," and now it was apparent that Cassidy had been drinking. Evidently he had not come without a well-filled flask, and it was getting the better of him.

"That'll do, Cassidy. Put your mules where you please. We are not responsible for them,"

answered Hone, abruptly turning his back. But the devil of hate, stirred by the devil of drink, was uppermost again.

"If that young feller ain't court-martialed for assaultin' me there'll be trouble," he growled, thickly. "I ain't been drivin' United States mail for six years not to know my rights."

"You haven't driven the mails for six months," said Hone, with cool contempt. "You were discharged as a nuisance long ago, and you and your rattle-trap yonder were simply picked up for this trip because no one else could be spared. Go and soak your head, man, and get to your blankets. You're half drunk now."

"I'll go when I've had my say to that young billy cock that struck me when I wasn't lookin'," answered Cassidy, with rising voice and choler. But he got no further. All on a sudden the tall form came striding from the tent.

"Get away from here, Cassidy," said the new-comer, in low, but forceful tones. "You're disturbing decent people. You wish to say your say to me, do you? Come right

on then, right out there on the open prairie. I've had too much to put up with to-day, and you're just exactly the thing I need."

But Dan looked at the quivering nostril and clinching fist of the young officer and temporized. "You've got a regiment at your back, young feller," said he. "I'll settle with you when you're kicked out of the army!"

"Don't touch him, Emslie," said Hone, springing to his feet. "Sergeant Cross, take that man under guard!"

It was all done so quietly, but for Cassidy's vocal upliftings, that barely a word of it was heard at the Engineer's tent, and when a few minutes later Mr. Emslie stood by the cotside to bid McAlister goodnight, and the little wife smiled gratefully at him from where Baby May lay sleeping sweetly on the doctor's bearskin robe, the man of the level and transit looked up from his pallet and stretched forth both hands and took Emslie's muscular brown paw in his grasp.

"I hope to live to see the day when I can half repay you, Lieutenant, for all your kindness and thought for these dear ones of mine," said he. "I'm not alone. There's something

behind me in all this work that you fellows will hear of—the Rock Island—by and by."

"Don't bother, Mr. McAlister," answered Emslie, blushing none the less. "Why—what we're both doing—it's just the way of the West."

CHAPTER III.

It must have been three o'clock in the clear, starlit morning that, on noiseless feet and crouching low, a soldier of the guard came swiftly over the prairie from the outpost on the westward side. "Where's the Old Man?" he whispered, to the watchful sergeant, at the second wagon.

"This way, Corcoran; what have you seen?" was the response.

"Nuthin'—It's what we heard! Indians are in them gulches across the bench or I'm a liar."

There was no need to wake the "old man." Captain Hone, rolled in his blanket under a leafy cottonwood, unrolled in a twinkling, and was buckling on his belt as the pair reached him. "With you in a moment, Corcoran," he said, in cautious tone. "Is the lieutenant out there?"

"He was, sir, but he's making the rounds now. He must be over across the creek."

"Very well. Just call Mr. Emslie, will you? He's lying back of the tent, yonder."

The night, for hours at least, had been almost intolerably still. Once in a while during the late evening the weird cry of the coyotes broke the silence far and near—a serenade to which every man within the camp had been long accustomed, and only little Mrs. McAlister was in the least disturbed. But, toward eleven o'clock even these night prowlers seemed to have vanished from the valley, and a hush as of utter desolation spread across the firmament.

Once in a while a shadowy sentry stooped softly and burrowed in the ashes of the cook fire under the bank, laid a stick upon the coals, then quickly smothered the tiny blaze, in order that not so much as a spark above the bank might betray the position of the camp. Even the comfort of the brier root or dhudeen was denied the soldier, and that, too, without so much as a word of caution from his commander. The veteran who needed the solace of tobacco sliced off a quid from his precious half slab and stowed it in his cheek. "Coyotes all asleep," whispered a nervous young

German, new to the plains and oppressed by the deathlike stillness, as he drew his blanket up about his ears and shivered a bit in the chill of the coming morn.

"Go you to sleep, sonny," growled the sentry, in reply. "They're skulking away from the two-legged coyotes. It's them ye'll hear next!" and then grinned as he sauntered away, having administered the antidote to his own advice.

Under the bank the stream lay like long, flawless mirror, a glistening chord to the arc of the defense, pent by a shoal of gravel a hundred yards away. Beyond the spangled pool wherein the stars were peeping brightly, a few dark objects could be dimly seen sprawled on the turf on the opposite bank, but, farther away, all was blackness to the very crest of the rolling bluffs outlined against the jeweled skies. Cassidy's stage mules were still placidly dozing—"Sure sign," said Hone, as he peered through the gloaming, "that Mr. Indian keeps well out on that side." The "bench" to the south and east, far as the "falda" of the bluffs lay flat and open, easily commanded by the rifles

of the few men stationed along the bank where, with the sod walls of the dugouts for prairie "donjon keeps," a low line of parapet had been thrown, and the little redoubt was made well nigh complete. The wounded still lay on their blankets and stretchers under the willows on the down-stream side, for Dr. Kent had cautioned against the use of the underground shelter until the last moment. "Fresh air and sunshine," said he, "cure more wounds than carbolic salve. Give me an open tent as against a hospital building every time."

McAlister lay upon a folding camp cot, but the others still occupied the "travois" litter, or were rolled in the blankets in which they had been borne to camp. A dozen men had been told off to carry them into the dugouts in the event of attack, and two sturdy fellows lying close beside the tent were ready, at first alarm, to lift the engineer. There was no question who should look out for Baby May and her mother—Emslie had spread his blanket not ten feet away.

And he sprang to his feet, alert and wide awake at the instant of the soldier's summons, and without a word followed quickly to where,

beside the old stage, the captain awaited him. From within that vehicle came the sound of stertorous breathing—Big Dan, a captive in his own caboose, sleeping off his liquor. Hone strode away over the low parapet and out to the open prairie beyond, Emslie close at his heels, Corcoran swift following.

"Where away did you hear the sound?" presently whispered the captain, and Corcoran pointed to the black line of bluffs between them and the brilliant sky. It was the northwest side of camp, and the ridge line loomed a good mile away. In the darkness they could not see the outpost, and at Hone's murmured order, the soldier signalled—a low, hissing whistle audible not a hundred yards. The answer came quickly from the left front, and there lay a corporal and another man, while a dark figure, stealing up from behind, came and joined them,—Lieutenant Britton, breathing quick and eagerly, for it was the boy's first summer afield. "What is it, youngster?" was Hone's whispered question.

"Sergeant Burrows says it's Indians sure, sir," was the answer, in excited, even tremulous undertone. "He's over at that clump of

bullberry bushes, and every mule under the bank is up and sniffing."

Yet there was not a whiff of wind. The night was breathless as the dead, and well nigh as still, but the corporal whispered, "Put your ear to the ground, sir," and down went the officers on their faces. Emslie was the first to lift his head.

"Hoof beats, lots of 'em, right out yonder!" he muttered, pointing to a rift in the ridge line where the bluffs were rent by a deep ravine.

"They're up stream, too, sir," said the corporal. "Two of 'em crossed the flat at a lope not ten minutes ago. Must ha' been full a mile away."

Hone rolled over on his side and looked to the east. Far over the ridge line beyond the camp and stream a faint, grayish pallor seemed creeping up the sky, though aloft the bright stars gleamed like molten steel, and the studded belt of Orion sparkled in undimmed radiance. "Time for the coyote reveille," he muttered, "unless they have all been scared away," and almost as he spoke there piped from down the valley, faint, half smothered,

yet distinct, the first notes of that familiar morning hymn of the old frontier.

"Yip, yip, yip. Ki yi-i -i-i, ki-i-i, yip, yap, yip," and then a rollicking roulade of yip and yap, yelp and gurgles, dying gradually away to silence. Emslie reached with the toe of his boot and touched young Britton. "Mark that, my boy. You'll hear the answer now, off yonder!"

And yonder it began, whereat Mr. Emslie sat bolt upright. "The corporal's right, sir," said he. "Those are Cheyenne signals."

For a moment Hone did not speak. Then very quietly he turned to Corcoran. "Slip back to camp and stir up the cooks. Say I want hot coffee ready for everybody. You've done well, Mr. Britton. Now, Emslie, come with me."

Just at the up-stream edge of the silent camp the three cavalry horses were tethered, their fore feet also securely hoppled, so that if lariat should break or picket pin pull loose, a run would be impossible. Two of them were already astir, nibbling at the rich, dew-laden bunch grass; the other, with a long, lazy, luxurious sigh of equine comfort, rolled over as

though for another snooze. In marked contrast to their tranquillity were the stir and tremor among the wagon mules a few yards further up stream. The long-eared and much maligned quadruped seems instinctively to feel the presence of Indians long before they can be detected by human sense.

At the stage and along the low line of trench the men were quickly girding up their loins and whispering together. Corcoran had passed the word, "Indians out at the front!" and no other reveille was needed. Down under the bank, with a blanket screen between his fire and the further shore, the company cook was already busy with his pots and kettles, for Hone was a wise campaigner and well knew men fought the better for a full stomach. Not a loud word was spoken. Men moved about with stealthy tread. Dan Cassidy's snore was the only sound that could be heard across the little camp. Even the fevered wounded lay in silence now, and their wearied doctor slept in peace. But all the time the faint light at the orient was spreading higher, and along the bluff line and afar down the valley to the northeast a violet hue came creeping into the

sky, and close at hand, dark, shapeless objects began slowly to take on form and substance. Stage and wagon threw off the film of night and stood faintly revealed, and then, over to the south, where the Mona trail came winding down from the divide now beginning to light up feebly above the gloom of the valley, again the sharp, yelping, querulous cry of the coyote woke the echoes, and was taken up and repeated far over at the opposite side. "Look to your sights, men," went the whisper along the trench. "Some of them may show at any minute."

Silence again for a while, and then, even before it was expected, a red tongue flashed from the outpost at the west, followed a second later by the sharp, stinging report of the Army Springfield. The bluffs rang far and near their resounding echo, and every sleeper started to instant life. Corporal Quinn was sending his compliments to some feathered warrior who, in the interest of science, was prowling too near the guarded lines.

That shot was the morning gun of a memorable and eventful day, for, a moment later, the pickets came in on the run.

CHAPTER IV.

There is something in the sound of a single shot, fired at the break of day and in the midst of intense silence, that thrills the nerves and sets every sense alert and stirs the blood as even the crashing volleys of later battle fail to do. In the trenches men sprang from their crouching positions, and, cocking their rifles, peered eagerly over the low parapet. Back of the wagons and under the bank they leaped to their feet one instant, and then, bending low, sped to their assigned stations on the line. The cavalry horses, snorting with excitement, tugged at their fetters and lariats, the mules flapped their long ears and huddled together like sheep, the men, told off to care for the wounded, made a leap for the handles of the few litters and looked eagerly to the young doctor for the signal to bear their charges under shelter. But though startled from sound sleep, Kent was as deliberate as ever, and with a single gesture cautioned them to wait.

From McAlister's tent there came the sound of petulant wail,—Baby May, awaking to a sense of her prerogatives and resenting disturbance of her dreams. Then the entire camp seemed waiting for the answering shot, but for a moment reply there was none.

"What'd you fire at?" demanded Hone, as Corporal Quinn and his two supporters came bounding in.

"Two Indians, sir, so close I could almost count their beads. They had crept up on their bellies, and we never saw nor heard 'em till one of 'em lifted up hardly a hundred yards off. Corcoran fired, sir, and hit him, I think, for he dropped instantly and his fellow gave a kind of whoop, and then we could hear the pony hoofs over at the mouth of yonder ravine. I thought sure they'd charge at once and we'd be caught and cut off out there in the open."

"You were right," said Hone, briefly, as he knelt by the stage. "Lug that driver out of there, Sergeant Dawson. He makes too much noise," whereat Cassidy's snores were summarily checked, and he himself was hauled, not too gently, from the heap in which he lay on the floor, and dragged sputtering to light.

"Go finish your nap under the bank, Cassidy," growled the sergeant, "or drown yourself, I don't care which. The water is handy by." The nearest men set up a titter as Dan's bloated face and bleary, blinking eyes were half revealed in the growing light, and with accustomed expletive he greeted the coming day. "Go soak your head, Dan," growled a kindred spirit among the teamsters. "You'll want your wits at the butt of your gun," and stupidly the fellow lurched along to the bank, close followed by his custodian, a private of the guard.

There was an abrupt descent of about six feet from the "bench" to the low ground skirting the creek. This latter was a mere strip, not six yards broad and barely twenty long, but already two of the wounded men had been brought hither, and laid upon the sandy soil not far from the cook fire. One of those wounded, a young rodman of the Engineer party, shot through the left thigh, seemed a bit flighty from fever or excitement. Several minutes had now elapsed since Corcoran's shot, and not a sign of reply had come from the shadowy depths under the distant bluffs, yet

two veteran plainsmen, scurrying in from the picket post up stream, caught sight of the prisoner and his conductor, and shouted instant warning. "Get your mules off that bench yonder, Dan Cassidy! You haven't a second to spare! There's a hundred Cheyennes in one bunch up the creek, and they'll come charging down here in a minute! Hey? What's the reason you can't?" broke off the spokesman, suddenly.

"Prisoner," said the sentinel, briefly. "Go on, Dan. Get that mug of yours under water, or it'll draw their fire. Look you after the mules, Curry. Sure *he* can't." And while one of the two hastened in search of Hone to report what they had seen, the other, followed by a ready comrade, plunged through the still water, and presently came driving the mules before them into the bed of the stream. In the splashing that resulted, the driver again began to swear, and at sound of his thick utterance and coarse, brutal voice, the young rodman under the willows started to a sitting posture on his litter, and stared about him. Cassidy had just picked up a rock and hurled it at one of his luckless mules when the fe-

vered eyes caught sight of him, and at that very instant Emslie appeared, striding along the edge of the bank from McAlister's tent, Baby May again nestling in his arms. Hone had evidently ordered the non-combatants under shelter, but up to this moment no sound of assault or menace came from without the camp, no voice save that of Denver Dan was uplifted within. At Emslie's heels came three sturdy fellows bearing the Engineer's litter, and by its side, anxious, yet fondly smiling, walked his devoted wife. "Stop that fellow's beastly noise!" called the offcer, stern, yet low, to the guardsman in charge. But before the young soldier could attempt to carry out the order, a cry of alarm, a woman's cry, startled both. Whirling about Emslie saw her staring, with frightened gaze and pallid cheek, and, following her eyes, caught sight of the wounded rodman, who, despite shaking, nervous hand, was aiming a heavy revolver at the unconscious tough. With the baby still in his arms, Emslie was over the bank in one spring and had kicked aside the deadly tool before the trembling finger could pull trigger. The pistol was discharged into empty air as it flew

into the bushes, and the would-be marksman, cowering under his blanket, hid his face in his arms. "It was my life or his," he whimpered, with a sob of terror. "He'd kill me on sight."

"This boy's delirious," said Emslie, as the doctor came hurrying over the bank. "He was within an ace of shooting Cassidy there."

"That tough?" exclaimed the doctor. Then down on his knees he went by the side of the quivering lad. "Stauffer," he said, in soothing tone, "that man can't harm you here. What has he done to you in the past?"

"I dasn't tell," shuddered the boy. "He swore he'd shoot me if ever we met again. Chester knows—Chester that's gone!"

"Not so delirious as you think," muttered the doctor. "Go on, Emslie. I'll attend to him. See Mrs. McAlister into that prairie bomb proof and then come back to me."

It was high time. The tips of the westward bluffs were all now tingeing with crimson and gold. The sun was slowly rising in the east and the veil of night drawing away from the winding valley. Not a sign of Indian could be seen from where the little garrison rallied

behind its low parapets, yet Quinn and Corcoran were old and reliable men, and Sergeant Burrows of the up-stream post had served with Hone ever since Appomattox, and what they said was gospel. Something held the Cheyennes at safe distance. Were they waiting for more of the scattered bands to reach them? Were there other troops on the Mona road?

Each moment as the light strengthened and objects in the valley became distinct, eager eyes were strained in the effort to discover the enemy, but without success. Bidding half the men remain at their posts, Hone ordered the others to breakfast. Then he went in person to see the doctor and question Stauffer. Kent met him at the bank. "No one is harmed, Captain," said he. "And Cassidy knows nothing of his narrow escape. Stauffer seems a bit daft, but for some reason is desperately afraid of that big bully. He won't say why, but it is something connected with Chester's case. If you've no objections, I'll keep him where he is. Now, pardon me, but where will you stow the chaplain and Major Tennant?"

"The chaplain," grinned the bearded cap-

tain, "says he means to handle a rifle if it comes to a fight. The major—well—Doesn't he wish to assume command?"

"No," laughed Kent. "He says he has every confidence in your dispositions. He will sit with McAlister. I've sent them into the west dugout. It's drier and cleaner. We have plenty of hard bread, bacon and sugar in both and abundant water. Why—that water is equal—almost—to the springs of Manitou. I took the barrels off the wagons, had 'em filled and set in the pits."

"Bueno!" said Hone, heartily. "And the other wounded will not go in unless we're attacked?"

"Not unless you order it. Here comes Emslie again."

Hone turned. "It's an ill wind that blows nobody good," said he. "Yesterday I was blaming Black Bill for ordering Emslie to remain here. Now I'm blessing him. That boy's a trump."

"Soldier all over," said the doctor, "if he did let Chester go, which I doubt. That's a nasty eye of Cassidy's. He must have hit him hard."

Hone's brow clouded. "I'm only afraid that cowardly bully will avenge himself in some dirty way. Face to face, of course, and on equal terms he'll never dare meet Emslie. I wish we knew about this other boy, Stauffer. McAlister says he's only been with the survey a month."

They stopped short in their chat and suddenly. The men at their noisy, gleeful field mess had been chattering like monkeys, excitably, almost joyously. The presence of danger—the prospect of deadly battle—seems to strangely exhilarate the soldier, but chat and laughter had ceased. Some of the men were on their feet. All were staring up stream, and the reason was quickly apparent. One of Sergeant Burrows' outposts was coming swiftly down the pebbly shore, waving his slouch hat as, crouching under the bank or across the unsheltered open space, he sped to join them. Not a word would he say to his comrades, however, from the moment he caught sight of his tall commander.

"Captain," he panted, as he halted and raised his hand in salute, "from our post we can see round yonder point, and it's there

they're crowded, and others are half way up the bluff in the ravine, and others still are peeping over toward Thunder Creek. The sergeant thinks there are some of our people coming along the trail, and they mean to ambush them."

Hone's face fell. "That's bad! I'd give a good deal to get warning to them," said he, "but—" The doctor and Emslie stood in silence, but with anxious eyes. Young Britton had come up just in time to hear the message.

"If that's what it is," said he, impulsively, "they could have ambushed them before now, unless it's a big crowd. There's enough Cheyennes out there to make it hot for a whole regiment, on high ground, anyhow."

Then there was sudden sensation among the listening, watchful men. "Look! See! See there! See 'em?" were the low cries, and a dozen hands pointed to the bluff line, a mile away to the southwest, where the road came winding down from the heights.

Surely enough. With trailing war-bonnet and lashing quirts, a dozen young braves came darting along a winding game trail just under the crest, sheltered from the view of persons

at the south, and reckless now of the gaze of those beseiged in the valley. One or two other Indians, creeping up the bluff on all fours, began peering over the top.

Hone turned to Emslie. "What troops did you pass or hear of between this and Mona?"

"Only the guards at the crossing, sir. Nothing else. Nothing else was expected."

"Then it's just some scouting party—perhaps a platoon of cavalry, and it's sure death to any man I send out to warn them back. Indeed, I fear it's too late!"

Young Britton grew visibly pale, small blame to him. "Then why haven't they jumped 'em already?" he asked, "if there's so very few of them?"

"Because, my lad," said Hone, gravely, "they mean to lure them over here where we can see the 'surround,' hoping to tempt us out of our trenches to the rescue. Then, you see, they'd have us all in the open." And Hone was thinking of Fort Phil Kearny, and the massacre of Colonel Fessenden's command, three times as strong in numbers as was this little force beleaguered on the Lancewood.

Doctor Kent turned away without a word. He felt that the captain was right.

And yet there were men within the little fort who, reasoning as did their officers, nevertheless dared to appeal. First to speak was "Terrier" Quinn. Some one of his fellows had been ass enough to twit him with coming back too soon from the outpost on the prairie, and but for prompt interference on part of the first sergeant, there would have been a finish fight in the lee of the stage. Quinn was still blazing with wrath and eagerness. "Captain," he cried, every inch of his stocky little frame a-quiver, "mayn't I take Curran and two horses? We can reach the bluffs right out here and see what's coming—or warn 'em some way."

The point on the bluffs indicated by the little Irishman's finger was directly opposite the ford and not so much as the feather of an Indian had shown within half a mile of it. The Cheyennes in sight were much further away. From camp it looked an easy matter to gallop thither, gain the crest, and from the high point have a view over the open "divide" toward Thunder Creek; but among the listening

groups old soldiers shook their heads, even before the captain spoke.

"It's like you, Corporal," he answered, in the grave, kindly tone his men so long remembered. "But, think, my lad. You see how many there are plainly visible to us, yet entirely out of view of any party on the road. How many do you suppose are crouching behind these very crests on every side of us? They dare not come within range of our rifles, but are praying we may be fools enough to venture within easy shot of theirs. You and Curran would be killed and scalped before our eyes, too far away for us to help you. If I didn't believe that they had those bluffs lined and guarded—even below us here and on both sides—I'd have sent those cavalrymen as couriers to find Colonel Briggs and let him know the Cheyennes have doubled back and were concentrating on us. No, men," he went on, looking frankly about him at the circle of intent, soldierly faces now centering on their captain, "what we have to do is guard our wounded and that blessed little woman and her baby. We have abundant food, water, ammunition, provided we don't waste our

shots, and a position in which we can stand off the whole Cheyenne nation if need be. Our first duty is here. I shall not send one of you to certain death trying to fathom Indian tricks. Go to your posts."

It was a strange thing, a commanding officer in the presence of the enemy taking his men into his confidence, as it were, and explaining to them the peril and difficulty of their position. It was a thing the European-taught soldier would have looked upon with amaze, and have described, perhaps, with scorn, yet it was the thing the American soldier, officer or rankman, never misunderstood, and in the story of the almost ceaseless campaigning of our cavalry and infantry on the frontier in the years that followed the civil war, the men in command who achieved the greatest measure of success were those who thus understood and trusted, and so won the trust and faith, of the men that rode in the ranks or fought behind the guns.

But, even while this scene was being enacted, vigilant eyes kept watch on the Indian movements, and as the men in silence and subordination retook the assigned positions, Emslie and

the doctor, studying the heights with their field glasses, noted that the warriors were more and more working along toward them and still peering excitedly over the crests, or darting along under shelter, evidently watching some steadily moving objects out on the upland beyond. Already a dozen of them had reached and crossed the trail down which Dan Cassidy's old stage had safely rattled barely twenty-four hours before. Here two of their number sprang from their ponies and crept up the bluff again, while others still came scurrying through the ravines, lower down the grassy slope, and even venturing out over the falda, long rifle shot away from Burrows' outpost. Certainly something was coming along the road,—something they meant, as Hone divined, to lure into full view of the defense before pouncing upon it in swift and murderous attack.

Then came a sudden cry from the clump of bushes at the up-stream edge of camp. Emslie and the doctor, too, had echoed in a call to Hone, who at the moment was studying the valley to the eastward. A gorgeously bonneted Indian, naked to the waist, and painted

in vivid scarlet and glaring yellow, had ridden suddenly into view, and before his bounding pony,—a cream-colored, mettlesome little steed,—the Cheyennes gave way in instant homage. Waving his lance, decked with strange, fanciful banneroles of brilliant flannel and feathers and streaming scalp locks, and gesticulating with his long, sinewy arms, the chief seemed giving orders to his braves, for the dust flew from their ponies' heels as they darted away in obedience. A moment more and only the red leader and perhaps half a dozen of his tribesmen remained in saddle near the crest, the others had scurried into the depths of the ravines to his right and left, and there they huddled, eagerly awaiting his call.

"It's Thunder Hawk! It's Thunder Hawk himself!" went up the cry from the lips of Sergeant Burrows, and, brave as he was, Hone's face went a shade paler. That meant that the principal bands were already on the ground, for Thunder Hawk was lord of the Western plains.

And then arose still another cry from the group at the southern edge, and men came crouching out of the shallow trenches every-

where to get at least a momentary glimpse of the scene. A white dot had just sprung into view over the crest. Bigger it grew and bigger, and then, all on a sudden, there trotted into sight and swiftly following the road, a six mule team with a white topped stage wagon, a few troopers on gray horses jogging easily alongside. "Grays!" cried Emslie. "There isn't a gray troop in the field column! It must be some of the Tenth Cavalry from the Arkansas!"

"Grays!" "Grays!" went up the word from lip to lip, and now, unrestrained, the men came springing from the trenches to the stream bank, leaving only the few sentries at their posts. "They are—they must be the Tenth!" said the doctor, as he stared through his glass. "The faces are black, yet what stage could that be—who could be taking such chances?"

"Look at the Indians! My God, can't we do *something?*" almost wailed young Britton, for, as all could plainly see, the warriors in the ravines were now crouching for their spring, many of them, those who had rifles, at least, sprawled on their bellies and covering the coming party riding unconsciously, jauntily, reck-

lessly down to their death. "Look at the Indians!" echoed many a voice among the awe-stricken, trembling groups, and again appealing glances were turned to the captain, who, stern and silent, stood gazing through his binocular, never heeding what was going on about him. Suddenly he spoke:—

"Send Cassidy here, quick!" And Cassidy, surly, yet subdued by the sense of common danger, was close at hand.

"Take that glass and tell me what you make of that wagon," said Hone.

It was a moment before the focus could be adjusted. Then Cassidy gazed in turn, his features working strangely, his mouth twitching at the tobacco-stained corners. "It ain't one of ours," he hazarded, "an' I'm damned if I can tell who's drivin'. It looks—my God, Cap!—It is! It's the 'Rapahoe—the general's own outfit—It's—"

But the rest was lost in sudden rush about him. "Back to your lines, men, quick!" rang the order. "Give 'em hell if they charge, but don't waste a shot!" A sputter of rifles borne on the breeze, a wild chorus of war cries from the bluffs, a vision of flashing armlets and

streaming feathers, manes and tails, as in resistless numbers the frenzied warriors dashed from their lair and swooped on the stage—the whir and zip of bullets overhead, the snap of twig and spat of taut canvas as the leaden missiles tore their way through frame and cover. All this in a space of three seconds told that the threatened attack had begun from every side, and summoned every man to instant duty.

CHAPTER V.

And now the wisdom of Hone's decision, heartless though it sounded, became manifest. Like the warriors of Clan Alpine at the whistle shrill of Roderick Dhu, from every *coulée* and ravine, from behind the curtaining crests and rounded bluffs there darted into view the wild soldiery of the plains, the Cheyennes in all their bravery and paint and feather, riding at top speed of their wiry ponies, charging straight for the little fortress at the ford until within six or seven hundred yards, then ducking low and veering away to right or left and all the time yelling like fiends. The wisdom of the Indian Bureau had not then provided the entire tribe with magazine rifles. Only the chiefs and a few leading warriors in each band were as yet equipped with these, as were all when a few years later they helpd annihilate Custer's column on the Little Horn, but few there were who had not muzzle-loading rifles

at least, and with warriors by the hundred circling and swooping in plain sight and firing as they rode, the rain of lead upon the defense was swift enough to drive the garrison to cover and for the moment keep down effective reply.

It was a sudden yet admirably planned attack, one well calculated to strike terror to the faint of heart, but Hone's men had seen many a similar dash along the Smoky Hill and Republican, and so met it without a sign of serious dread; some, indeed, shouting defiance as the red riders came, and yelling derision as they swerved away. Then it was beautiful to watch the effect as the long Springfields, leveled over the low parapet, took up their part in the chorus, and the bullets began to nip the turf about the flying heels of the Indian ponies. In the first moment of the charge every warrior had fired whatever he owned that would add to the clamor, even if his weapon were only some old fashioned dragoon horse pistol that wouldn't carry half way to the corral. Then as these had to be reloaded the Indian fire slackened almost as suddenly as it began, only the few score "magazines" or

breechloaders in the hands of the big men keeping up the clatter. It was the same old trick:—Terrify the enemy into flight or non-resistance, if a possible thing, and then dash on into their midst; but circle warily away if they stoutly stood fast and aimed low and vengefully in reply.

There had been a precipitate dive for the shelter of the dugout on part of the few non-combatants able to hobble, the slightly wounded, the two or three attendants, and with them, hurriedly and with little less dignity, went the elderly major. To the delight of the soldiers, however, who should come leaping into the trench at the westward front but the chaplain himself, a borrowed rifle in his white and unaccustomed hands. Up went a jubilant shout for the parson, whereat the gentle minister visibly blushed, took careful aim at nothing and pulled trigger with both eyes shut—a gallant if ineffective effort. "Lie down, chaplain!" shouted Sergeant Scott. "Aim over the dirt and shut only one eye. Pick off that big galoot on the calico pony and never mind how it kicks. Wait just a minute," he added, as the veins seemed almost bursting in the

good chaplain's face, and he pulled frantically at the unyielding trigger, "That gun goes off easier at full cock," whereat the chaplain's blush became crimson, though, like a little man, he joined in the rollicking laugh at his expense. "That's it! See that shot, fellows! That's a corker, Chaplain. You made that yellow-striped, son-of-a-gopher duck for his life!" And Hone, striding from point to point directing the slow, well-aimed fire of his men, heard the shouting and fun beyond the second wagon and taking a closer look at the cause discovered the chaplain sprawled full length in the dirt and peeping eagerly through the sights of his Springfield in hopes of a shot. "Well done, Dominie!" he cried, with a grin of appreciation. "This side's all safe." And indeed it seemed so, for like the ruse of Thunder Hawk to draw Hone from his cover in effort to succor the stage, the grand dash to overwhelm the defense had failed of its purpose.

But what of the stage—"the general's wagon," as Cassidy declared it to be—and what of its dusky guards, "the Tenth from the Arkansas"? For nearly four minutes its escort had

been in sight winding confidently down into the depths of the valley, right into the midst of foes and utterly ignoring the frantic waving of hats or blankets on part of excitable men at the ford. Then came the sudden and furious assault when wagon and guards got within range, an assault that kept every soldier fully occupied for a moment and unable to see what happened those luckless comrades out on the road. Now as the fire slackened and the Indians drew away to a distance of eight hundred yards where there was much shouting and signalling and dashing about, men on the southern front could afford to lift their heads with the smoke of their rifles and stare in dreadful fascination to where they last had seen the party, and every vestige of it, wagon, mules and escort, had vanished from the face of the earth. One cool-headed veteran who had managed to see something of what had occurred, declared in answer to Emslie's eager question that the Indians had dashed upon it at the instant the attack began and had "run the whole outfit" into a ravine, where, hidden by the shoulder of bluff from view of the camp, they

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might finish their bloody work without fear of reprisals.

But what could it mean; this coming of the general's wagon, his field tallyho, with only a squad of guards, and with who could say what precious freight among its occupants, driving straight into an ambuscading thousand of foes? Cassidy almost frantically, again and again, declared that he could not be mistaken.

Yet, at the last heard of the general, he was at headquarters at Fort Leavenworth, directing the campaign, but his field wagon was generally kept at Fort Lyon, and it could easily have been sent to Mona to meet him at the end of the railway, and from that point it was just possible that, believing the Cheyennes driven before old Black Bill over toward the breaks of the Republican, he had ventured out with only this little escort. If so, he and his men were by this time paying the penalty of their rashness—butchered behind the bluff. A few of Hone's people were ready to swear they saw a hundred Indians gathering there and heard furious yells and volleys, even in the midst of the scattering fire of the Cheyenne attack. Thunder Hawk had played his game

of trying to lure them out to the rescue until the vehicle was almost in the bottom, and then, failing to fool Hone, had signalled the general assault. Three flashes from his little "devil's glass"—his tiny pocket mirror—had done the rest.

Whatever their fate, one thing was certain,—the wagon party was no longer a factor in the fight. A dozen braves suddenly rode into view over the very bluff behind which it had vanished, and brandishing their lances and "coup sticks," at the end of which were certain trailing, fluttering objects that might pass for scalps, they came triumphantly down the slope, chanting in chorus some wild, barbaric war song, only faintly audible in the distance, but apparently of immense import and satisfaction to themselves. "Sight for a thousand yards and see if you can fetch some of those fellows with a volley," said Hone to his nearmost men and half a dozen long barrels were quickly trained, quartering across the stream. "Aim at that chief in the big war bonnet," he added. "It's worth the trial," and the slides of the rear sights went up almost to top notch. "Wait now till I give the word,"

he added, as he leveled his binocular, and they waited—waited long. Dropping for the moment his watch at the eastward trench, from which point a bevy of painted horsemen could be seen darting wildly about, Emslie bent low and ran over to watch the effect of the volley. The major, taking heart at the lull in the firing, peeped from the entrance of the dugout. Even Dan Cassidy rolled out from his private rifle pit under the stage and, rising to the knee, strained his red eyes in the effort to see. Overhead the bullets came singing and whirring through the leafy branches of the cottonwoods, and frequently one would kick up the dust in the parapet or bank, but Hone seemed never to notice. His tall, spare, muscular figure was standing in bold relief against the southern sky, as the major peered cautiously out upon the scene. The doctor was bending at the moment over a soldier who had been painfully stricken by a spent bullet, and Mrs. McAlister, who had crept to the entrance of her dugout, hoping for a word with Emslie, winced at the sight, yet hovered there fascinated by the soldier picture made by the stalwart captain. Just as Emslie reached her side, Hone's

chest seemed to expand as though he were drawing a long breath and about to speak, but, with the glasses still at his eyes, he never ceased his gaze at the distant ten, riding boastfully, tauntingly toward them. Out across the level prairies certain of the Indians had leaped from their ponies, and lying prone, had begun a long range but far more accurate fire upon the corral, but thus far most of their missiles had flown high. All on a sudden there came the crack of two rifles from some willows not three hundred yards away down stream,—the instant hiss of flying lead, so low that some men instinctively ducked and the major dodged back into his cubby hole. Then Hone, with a hand clasped to his side, was seen to sway, and the field glass dropped with a thud upon the turf. Emslie leaped to his support. "My God, Captain! Are you hit?" he cried.

"Yes," was the half whispered answer. "Don't let them see. It's bad, I fear. The doctor—please." But by the time Kent could come consciousness was going. The gallant soldier lay swooning in a fast flowing pool of his own blood, and Kent's face was pale with grief and dread as he tore through the

rough field uniform and disclosed the wound from which the life was welling. "Help me get him under the bank," he whispered to Cassidy, for Emslie had darted away. "Don't let the men know if a possible thing."

But how could they help knowing? Erect and conspicuous Hone had stood in sight of all. The shots so close at hand as to sound almost like their own, had caused but little notice. It was the sudden sway of the tall, commanding form and Emslie's rush to aid that told the story. With two men at his heels, the lieutenant had gone crouching through the willows down stream, intent on vengeance, but with jeers of triumph and defiance, two mounted Indians tore away across the bench from the sheltering trees, and though pursuing bullets whistled past their ears, rode safely and swiftly behind the screen of a projecting tongue from the eastward heights, and when the young officer regained the corral and his anxious men, the doctor looked up with solemn eyes:—

"Emslie," said he, "you are in command."

CHAPTER VI.

The long summer day was drawing to its close, and the spirits of the beseiged were drooping with the sun. It had been a day of sore trial, of intense strain. Now, as another night wore on, the effect upon the little garrison was manifest. Jibe and joke and laughter had ceased. Men spoke in low, brief tone when they spoke at all. Faces that were young and jubilant at dawn looked gray and grim in the waning light, as the shadow of the westward bluffs crept like flooding tide across the valley, enshrouding the fire-spitting little plains fort, and then sweeping up the eastward heights until they, too, were wrapped in gloom. The loss of their great-hearted captain, now hovering betwixt life and death, had told with cruel force upon his men, to whom he had long been both father and commander and to whom young Emslie was almost a stranger. In no wise, however, did it sap

the vim and vigor of the defense. The American soldier seems to fight with fiercer purpose and deadlier aim when some loved leader has been stricken. In no way did young Emslie lack their full support,—their entire obedience. Averse as he often is to discipline in times of piping peace, the soldier of these United States becomes a model under fire, and officers whom he will shirk saluting when off duty, he will shed his blood for to the last drop on the field.

And for Emslie these veteran campaigners had fought the livelong day as fervently as they would for Hone. Indeed, for him they were still fighting—and for each other,—and for the score of sorely wounded now lying thick below the bank,—for the helpless ones in those close and stuffy dugouts,—for that blue-eyed young mother and her innocent and smiling babe. Thrice at intervals during the day had Thunder Hawk sent his swarming warriors in headlong charge, hoping to sweep victorious into and over the corral, but time and again the low-aimed, deadly, vengeful fire had emptied the saddles of his foremost braves, and the big chief from his commanding

perch on the bluff had shouted and signalled in vain. To right and left or to the right about, his riders veered long before they reached arrow range of the beseiged, and he never dreamed how many within the little enclosure had fallen under the concentrated fire rained upon them without cessation throughout the day. Gallant little "Terrier" Quinn had died without a sound, shot through the heart. Sergeant Scott and three other men were killed. Lieutenant Britton had a rifle ball through the left fore arm. Sergeants Burrows and Conly, Corporal Metz, ten soldiers and a teamster had swelled the list of wounded, but worst of all, the ammunition was beginning to run low. There was left barely fifteen rounds per man.

Hidden under the bank, two of the cavalry horses and seven of the mules were still unhurt. The others were stiffening in their tracks. Food and water the garrison had in plenty, but at the rate they were going, as Dan Cassidy pointed out to Teamster Feeny, there would be none left to need them this time to-morrow, unless Black Bill, too, should double on his tracks and, harking back to the

Lancewood in search of the Cheyennes, find and relieve the beleagured command. At nightfall Emslie ordered coffee and abundant supper served out to all hands, and men in the trenches ate and drank with the rifle butt almost at the shoulder. Only once during the day had he been able to look within the dugout and say a plucky word of cheer to McAlister and his brave, silent little wife, and then Baby May had beamed upon him with eager, smiling welcome and had stretched forth her chubby little arms, begging—inarticulate, yet imperative,—to be taken. For a moment the young fellow had lifted her in his strong hands, strained her to his heart and pressed a kiss on the soft, rounded cheek; then to her infantile wrath and amaze, had set her down and, deaf to her indignant pleading, had gone back to his perilous duty. "If I thought the men needed—er—er—inspiration, or that I could be of use, Mr. Emslie," Major Tennant had remarked, "I should join the chaplain on the line, but as I'm too short sighted to shoot, I'd be in the way. Perhaps it's better to hold myself in reserve in case—er—anything should happen to you." And

Emslie grinned his acquiescence, and young Britton set his teeth and swore.

That was toward noon, before many men were hit and the fiercest charges had been made. Things looked black when darkness settled down. Kent was wearing out with the incessant labor of his duties with the wounded. The steward could hardly keep awake. The chaplain's benevolent face was filled with anxiety as he came to Emslie to discuss the situation. "Everything, of course, depends on their receiving word as to our critical condition," said he. "But how can we hope that word shall reach them?"

"In two ways," said Emslie. "The scouts from Antelope must know something's wrong, because there were none from here to meet them to-day. Then, as all the tribes seem to be gathered about us here, the colonel's scouts must have shown him that the trails he was following had dwindled away and the Indians had doubled back. We are all right if we can hold out twenty-four hours."

And now that became the solemn question. No sooner had darkness settled down upon the valley than the Cheyennes began creeping, cat-

like, upon the corral. Hard work at odd moments had strengthened the defenses and deepened the trench. But in order to prevent sudden rush by night, Emslie had taken a leaf out of Hone's book of plains tactics, and once more little squads of picked men were posted just pistol shot out from camp, stationed in little hollows or depressions, whence moving objects along the prairie could be seen against the low-hanging stars. Quinn's post of the previous night was again occupied with Corcoran—"lanced" corporal on the spot,* and before that young Irishman had been twenty minutes out of sight, a low whistle summoned the sergeant of the pickets. Away went Sergeant Donovan, "*ventre a terre*" and back he came doubled up like a pocket rule. "What is it, Sergeant?" demanded Emslie, as he awaited the report at the stage.

"It's Corcoran's new chevrons, sir," was the droll answer, that even amidst their grim surroundings raised a laugh among the nearest men. "The lieutenant lanced him an hour ago; the Indians have arrowed him now, and

*A soldier detailed to perform the duty of a non-commissioned officer, before receiving the actual warrant of the colonel, is called a "lance" sergeant or "lance" corporal.

he says will he come in or the doctor come out and finish the stitch in his arm?"

"Take one man out to relieve him and send him in," said Emslie, with a smile at the sergeant's wit. Yet this was what he almost dreaded—that the Cheyennes might crawl within a hundred yards of the trenches and, surrounding him, send their noiseless arrows in from every side, falling like the shafts of the Norman archers at Hastings, as though from the skies, and spitting his defenseless men in the dark. The lull in the battle had come with the night, and silence for a little while had settled over the valley. "Sure sign they're plotting new devilment," growled Cassidy, from his lair beneath the stage. He at least was secure from plunging arrows, yet far from easy in his mind. Twice had Emslie seen him whispering with Feeny, and once with "Kansas," the elder of the two scouts with Hone's command. A few minutes later in the evening Emslie, Britton (whose arm was in a sling and bandaged), a sergeant with his rifle, and a soldier holding a light, were gathered about Corcoran at the doctor's improvised surgery under the bank, where Kent

stanched and bathed and bound, when three shadows stooped between them and the sky and stopped at the entrance of the first dugout. "Go see who they are and what they want," said Emslie, to a drowsy drummer boy, and resumed his questioning of Corcoran.

It was some little time before the lad came sliding back down the bank. "They was talkin' with the major, sir," said he.

"Who were they?" asked Emslie, far more interested in Corcoran's description of what he had heard out at the front.

"Denver Dan, sir, and Kansas and Feeny."

The three officers looked quickly, significantly into each other's faces. "Better see to that at once, Emslie," murmured Dr. Kent. "There is only one commander here. Major Tennant must either come out of his hole and take entire charge or none. If my words are mutinous jot them down, somebody, and report them to General Sheridan."

It was the mention of the famous commander's name, probably, that told of the thought still uppermost in the minds of so many of the defenders. What had been the fate of the occupants and the little escort of

the stage wagon captured that morning in plain view of camp?—"The General's," as Cassidy had promptly and positively declared it. Not for a moment had Hone or his officers believed the general, or any other officer of rank, to be within it. The escort was far too small,—only half a dozen men—and later as the day wore on and Cassidy's croakings and prophesies of annihilation angered some of the men who heard him, the conviction was growing that Cassidy lied. That some such vehicle had been used by the general during the campaign of the previous year many had heard, but even before Hone was stricken down he had scoffed at Cassidy's statement. "At the very best," said he, to Kent, "it's some rig the quartermaster's department has hired for the occasion, though it for all the world resembles that old Arapahoe they used to run on the Denver line. They may have been sending out a staff officer with despatches, perhaps, relying on Briggs' report that he was driving the Indians before them into Nebraska. God be good to him. He's past praying for now, and so's his escort."

"But how do you account for these?—the

Tenth Cavalry are down on the Arkansas, and what object could Cassidy have had?"

"The Tenth *have* been over at the Arkansas," was Hone's answer, "but some may well have been sent up to reinforce us. As for Cassidy, I hate to think it, but he was urgent that we should move out to the rescue. He was as eager as were the Indians."

"Yet I don't see how that could have helped *him*," said the doctor. "We've got to fight or fall together here."

"Nor could I see at first," answered Hone, and all the more forcibly did it strike the surgeon now. "But had we gone out into the open the Indians would have concentrated on us, every man of them. That would have left the coast clear for Cassidy. He and Kansas could have taken the horses and galloped away down stream and later, probably, reached Antelope in safety and reported us all massacred, no doubt."

And now Cassidy had been approaching Major Tennant, who, as senior line officer present, should have been in command, yet shirked the peril and responsibility. Emslie took fire the moment Kent told him of Hone's

suspicions, and without a word he started for the dugout. The shadowy forms vanished at his coming, but it was Tennant he sought, not them. "Major Tennant," said he, in tones that trembled a bit, despite his effort, "Captain Hone was confident this morning that Cassidy was laying plans to take our horses and one or two of his pals and escape. Moreover, Cassidy has been striving to stir up some of the men to go with him. What brought him here, to you?"

The quavering voice of the elder was slow to answer. "You do—indeed you do them injustice, Mr. Emslie," he finally protested. "They offer to go for aid. They say they can escape under cover of darkness."

"They can't," was the sharp, sturdy answer. "We are surrounded on every side. If I thought anybody could slip through I should *send* him, sir."

"But—er—you don't understand, Mr. Emslie. We are in a deplorable condition, with so many dead and wounded, and—and I'm sure these dead mules are beginning to smell. We must have help and his plan is very simple. You to go out—this way, southeastward, and

take most of the men, and—er—er—engage the attention of the enemy, you see. Then—er—*they* could slip out up stream as the Indians are—er—occupied by you."

"And how are we to get back, sir, and what's to become of you while we're out?" demanded Emslie.

But the answer never came. All on a sudden the silence of the night was broken by a quick sputter of shots at the outpost down the stream. Then came a chorus of blood-curdling yells, and then the glare of flame. Some new devilment was indeed afoot in the timber five hundred yards away. The stream was tortuous, the bank on both sides quite steep, and here and there in the sandy bottom willow patches were thick, while the leafy cottonwoods grew in shadowy, whispering clusters, stirred by the rising night wind.

A soldier came crouching back along the edge of the water, and Emslie sprang to meet him.

"In God's name, Lieutenant," he cried, "ain't there something we can do? They've got some white men there and are fixin' to burn 'em at the stake."

And then there rose upon the air a scream of human agony, shrill, prolonged, heart-rending, and at the sound men sprang to their feet to listen, in awful sympathy and dread, in mad desire, at any risk, at any cost—to aid or avenge.

"Back to your posts, men! Down with you, instantly!" rang out Emslie's stern young voice. "Have you forgotten your captain? Keep down, I say," and down, shuddering and reluctant they went, and not too promptly, for just what Emslie feared had come to pass. The blackness of the night was filled with swift-flying darts of death. Two men were transfixed before they could regain their shelter, and their brave young leader, his heart throbbing with dread for these helpless innocents in the fancied safety of the dugout, felt sudden sting and blow at the outer corner of the eye, felt the gush of hot blood that instantly followed, and knew that an arrow, glancing on the bone, had torn a gash along the left temple and well nigh blinded him.

CHAPTER VII.

Another day was breaking, cold, still and pallid, and the first faint light revealed those human wolves, the Cheyennes, flitting away from the still unbroken circle of the defense, seeking the safety of distance from the deadly rifles of the few remaining defenders. It had been a night of horrors. So far as could be judged by the shrieks of the victims and the exultant chantings of the mad Indians, three luckless captives had been tortured to death within long rifle shot of the corral, yet at a point in the bendings of the stream protected by the bank from all but plunging fire. Save them, rescue them they could not. Even had they no responsibilities of their own, no women, no score and ten of wounded men to guard and protect, the command was too small in number to make the faintest impression. Garvey, the soldier who came in with the frantic plea for help, had gone back to his post

only to be found an hour later, pierced by an Indian arrow and raving mad, his brain turned by the horror of the scenes he could imagine, yet could not see. Kent had been shot through the shoulder while bandaging the gash in Emslie's temple. The chaplain, murmuring the prayer for the dying as he knelt by the little drummer's side, had his coat torn through at the breast by an arrow that glanced on the ribs over his stout old heart. Three more men were numbered with the dead or seriously wounded. The air seemed literally alive with arrows all the livelong night. Not till the gray of dawn did they cease, and yet not one whisper of this peril had been allowed to pass the sodded portal of the refuge wherein lay McAlister with his precious wife and baby.

Kent's field hospital under the bank was filled now to the limit of its capacity. The number of effectives on the fighting line was reduced to thirty-two, all told, and the number of their cartridges to eleven to the man.

Worn with sleeplessness and strain, the garrison still fought on with dogged nerve and determination. Indeed there was nothing

else to do. There is no such thing as "surrender with the honors of war"—no such word as capitulation in the vocabulary of the Indian, except when he is in the hole and the soldier the victor. Then he always expects for himself the mercy he was never known to show. It is better to die fighting than at the torture stake. Emslie's men needed no stimulus to keep up the fight, yet they loved it in him, that though weak and suffering, he should creep the round of the corral to say words of cheer and to prophesy that the cavalry would surely be coming by noon. God be thanked, they had abundant water for the wounded!

For over an hour as the night wore away and the first faint tinge of gray appeared in the eastern sky, even the Indians seemed to have tired of their torment, and numbers of them had gathered in some impromptu council half a mile away down the Lancewood. There had been a long powwow, with much shouting and declamation and beating of drums. The powerful voice of Thunder Hawk could be heard echoing from cliff to cliff, exhorting his followers. Kansas swore he would know it

anywhere,—that he had heard it time and again, and Kansas was visibly excited. "He knows—they all know—we're short of ammunition," said he, "and though I can't catch the words, I know enough of Cheyenne to swear he's urging them to one grand rush. There's twenty or thirty of us sound enough yet to cut our way out, if we only had horses—"

"And leave the wounded and the lady, you —" broke in Sergeant Donovan, in deep wrath. "Stow that talk, Kansas!"

"What's the good?" snarled the scout. "We can't save 'em by stayin'. It's only giving the Indian so many more scalps. He's going to have theirs anyhow. All hell can't save 'em!"

"Shut up," was the stern order, yet there were men who heard and heeded. Cassidy, Kansas and the teamster had been allowed to keep together at the stage, but Donovan made up his mind at three o'clock they would better be separated. He was crawling over to where Emslie crouched at the bank, listening to the sounds from below, when a sudden sputter of firing down stream told of new emergency in that direction. Just about four

o'clock there had been lively interchange of shots with some large parties of Cheyennes riding down the level bench to join the revelers where the council fires were beginning to light, and for perhaps twenty minutes, more than half of Emslie's little force was needed on that front. They were just beginning to distinguish each other's faces in the feeble gray light, and sliding back to their usual stations as things seemed quieting down at the northeast, when far away up stream, at a point from which no such sounds had come before, faintly on the morning breeze they heard two quick shots, then two or three more—then a few seconds later, others still further away, and then, nearer at hand,—somewhere over to the south, a commotion among the Indians, —much shouting and scurrying and a rush of pony hoofs bounding away up the valley, and men's hearts began to beat with sudden hope and joy. Could it mean that help was coming,—that the advance guard of some rescuing force was already engaging the enemy? With a sob at his throat, young Britton came running to the dugouts and, bending low, called to the fevered occupants: "Good news,

boys! Something's coming! You can hear firing away off toward Thunder Creek!" Then to the next one he hurried. A dim light was burning below where McAlister lay wakeful on his cot, his wife's little hand clasped in his as she knelt by his side, Baby May sleeping sweetly on the doctor's robe. Kent, too, was there at the moment, pale and bandaged, and he looked up with joy in his eyes at Britton's excited call. "Good news, Mrs. McAlister! They've found us, sure. Something's coming from the southwest!"

And then the lad went bounding to join his senior by a year or two,—the young commander on whose shoulders so grave a care had fallen, and Britton stopped short at sight of the look in Emslie's face, and at the words of Corporal Metz, just up from his post at the south side, close to the stream.

"Lieutenant," he stuttered in halting English, his voice breaking through weakness, weariness and excitement, his lips pallid and quivering, "Lieutenant, dem horses is gone—all two—unt Gassity unt Kansas mit!"

It was true. Seizing the chance when besieged and besiegers both seemed crowding

to the down-stream side, the recreants had stolen the only two horses left and, abandoning Feeny to his fate, had crept away up stream until they could mount and dash for the hills. The last chance of sending couriers to the cavalry column was gone.

CHAPTER VIII.

Long as Bob Emslie shall live he can never forget the picture that opened before him with the rising sun of this third day of the siege. Ever bold and beautiful, the rounded summits of the Lancewood bluffs stood revealed in radiance almost intolerable. The slanting sunbeams flashed on myriad clusters of bunch grass, every tiny stem heavily laden with its drops of dew, and while massive base and far rolling spurs stood blanketed in gloom, the crests were bathed in prismatic, jeweled wealth of color, in vivid crimson and yellow, in purple and gold that fairly dazzled the eye. Far and near, up and down the winding valley, a silvery veil of mist, drifting slowly skyward from the placid waters, parted the wondrous picture like a screen, gray and somber as it lifted from among the ghostly cottonwoods, snowy, glistening white where it shone against the blue of heaven, and blushing in exquisite

hue of pink and rose where met and kissed by the eager rays. Away to the west, peeping down upon the scene through a rift in the foothills, a shining, snowy cone, a solitary watcher of the Rockies, stood sentinel over the morning. Moving leisurely down a distant ridge, full in the sheen of the sunbeams, a little herd of antelope gave life to the peaceful scene. Coming slowly into view only a mile away, on the other hand, a dark, dense, threatening cloud rolled forward and outward, overspreading the level bench from bluff to bluff—a cloud tipped with lance and feather and barbaric pennon, filled with strange muttering and with rumbling, muffled thunder, a cloud that rose in darkness and that told of death. The Cheyenne leader had massed his braves for one superhuman effort to overwhelm the well-nigh exhausted garrison, and Emslie knew he had barely twenty sound men with which to meet it.

He and the twenty had taken solemn counsel together in the watches of the night, and the dark hour that followed Thunder Hawk's grand burst of oratory. Some few might be faint of heart and well nigh hopeless, but all

could realize that only one course was left to them—fight to the last drop. At least there were cartridges with which to empty many a saddle in the next charge, but, should the warriors charge home despite their losses, there would be no man left to tell how the soldiers died.

And there should be no woman left to meet the fate of the poor creatures captured by that Indian fiend, Satanta, so short a time before. But who was to see to that? Emslie had gone soon after daybreak and called Major Tennant outside. "We are near our last cartridge," said he, "and cannot hold out much longer. Will you tell McAlister or shall I?"

"He knows," quavered Tennant, with breaking voice. "He—he made me tell him awhile ago as she lay asleep—he's got his revolver—ready."

Then McAlister understood. That at least was well. Emslie paused one moment. He longed to go within and kneel and press a kiss upon that unconscious baby face, and take one, perhaps last, look at the fair, sleeping mother, but he needed all his strength and

manhood. He had turned away when Tennant held him.

"Is it really so—er—hopeless? Isn't there something we—er—*you* could do?" he asked, his pallid lips twitching piteously. Poor Tennant! He had been sitting beside the rude couch they had made for the captain, where Hone now slept under the influence of opiates, given to dull the cruel pain of his wound. Kent could see no other way, for with every conscious moment, despite his pain and peril Hone would strive to rise and resume command. His was indeed a desperate case, and Kent, worn and weary, had been blunt enough with Tennant in so saying. Poor Tennant! His thoughts, no doubt, were with the distant ones, children and children's children in his peaceful home. It was hard to have spent a lifetime in comparative security, in wartime in mustering or recruiting work, and then still further years on bureau duty, only to be trapped and caught at last to die like this. Emslie could find no rancor in his heart against him. Tennant was not the only veteran, "lagging superfluous," whom influential kindred foisted on the rolls of the army to the exclu-

sion of better men and soldiers. It was no fault of his that a commission had been got for him in the fighting force. The senator, his wife's brother, would have it so rather than support the family himself, and Tennant meekly drew his pay and strove hard not to be officious. It was all a mistake, this sending him to the field. The chaplain came to them at the moment, his face worn and seamed and gray. There was this blessed lull preceding the final storm, and men availed themselves of the chance to look one moment into each other's eyes, searching for a gleam of hope.

Again was the question asked: "Isn't there something we can do?" Perhaps poor Tennant still cherished the idea that somebody should creep through the Indian lines and find the scouting column and bring them rescue, but there was no answer. Two or three at a time some of the men were slipping down to the stream, bathing their faces and heads and seeking coffee at the cook fire, then with steaming mug in hand, creeping back to their posts. "I'll try that, too," said Emslie. "Will you come, chaplain?"

"Presently," was the answer, grave and

gentle. "But now the wounded have asked me to come and pray."

In the solemn hush of the dawn the voice of the brave old soldier of the cross was soon uplifted, and Emslie, standing bareheaded by the silent pool, listened dumbly as he watched the first swift pencils of light, darting across from crest to crest, revealing here and there the dim, shadowy form of feathered riders along the bluffs, telling that though the great mass of their assailants were still gathered at the council fires down stream, the vigilance of the foe relaxed not. On the heights to the southeast, directly before him, two Indian sentries were crouching, their ponies barely discernible against the dark upheaval, while from the low ground the war bonnets of the uppermost was thrown in bold relief against the sky. Even as he listened to the chaplain's invocation,—his almost passionate plea for divine aid for these helpless men, for that gentle and loving wife and mother, for that innocent babe, and to the half stifled sobbing of one poor, maimed, homesick, hopeless lad, Emslie watched that distant foe in fascination. Something of far greater consequence than the siege

seemed claiming eager attention, for twice, with catlike stealth and swiftness, the sentry shifted his position as the light increased, enabling him to peer still further toward the east. Then his savage companion left his lair, as though hastily summoned, and crept to join him. Could it be that help was coming at last,—that with sunrise there would be the sound of signalling trumpet,—the cheer of charging squadron? What was this the chaplain was saying: "Send thine angel in might and mercy and in power that these thy children, who have endured so long, may yet live to praise and magnify thy holy name—that He who endureth to the end may indeed be satisfied." For an instant something wet and warm dimmed the young commander's eyes, as he looked at the fresh heaped mounds, where without the rythmic farewell volleys, but to the sound of shotted guns they had hastily laid their soldier dead, and then he turned and gazed upon the many prostrate forms, the victims of savage hate and craft. Then something white and ghostlike appeared at the dark entrance of the nearest refuge, and, as he dashed his hand across the brimming lids

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and turned to see, there stood the mother with little May dancing in her arms.

And then it was that from the lookouts down stream the word was passed. "Coming again—Be ready, men!"

Emslie sprang up the bank. "Keep within!" he called to the unconscious pair. "They may fire any minute." But he followed into the little tunnel and took the baby in his arms, and, without another spoken word, kissed her soft cheek.

"Have you nothing to tell me, Mr. Emslie?" pleaded the pale-faced little woman, looking imploringly into his eyes.

"Nothing," he answered, "but—hope."

For as he turned and gazed once more at the eastward heights, the Indian scouts were gone. In the gathering light he could see one of them lashing away down the bluff, and with eager ring in his voice, he shouted to his men. "Hurrah, lads! They see something coming sure! Don't waste a shot! We'll beat 'em yet!" Dark indeed had been the hour before the dawn, but now the morn had broken, the light was in the skies, the glad and glorious sunshine came cresting the prairie waves with

gold, and then, peering into the valley where death indeed menaced in that rumbling, wide-spreading, slowly heaving cloud. But stout hearts still beat in the little fort, keen eyes glanced along the death-dealing tubes, and with reviving hope in every breast and fervent, whispered prayer again on many a lip, the war-worn little band of brothers knelt and crouched and grimly waited.

At the very moment when the splendor of the opening day was at its height, the dun red shifting cloud in the breadth of the valley seemed suddenly to waver and then to stand. The muffled thunder died away. The dust that rose from the spongy soil in the bottom near the stream settled slowly down, and then in front of the shimmering cavalcade there swept into view a superb figure of savage strength and power—Thunder Hawk in all his barbaric beauty. A gorgeous war bonnet of eagle's feathers crowning his proud head, trailed down his prancing charger's flanks and well-nigh swept the ground. Shield and lance, necklace and armlet, bridle and trappings, every item of his equipment as though heavily studded with silver, gleamed and glistened,

when, full in the flash of the slanting rays just reaching the foothills on the westward side, the great chief rode slowly into view round the right of his long line and there halted to receive the homage of his braves. Palm to mouth the living war cloud welcomed him with thrilling chorus of Indian cheers,—the wild, weird cry that so resembles the yelp of that four-footed cousin, the wolf. For a moment it rose and fell in alternate wave of sound, then almost abruptly ceased, as he raised his long, lean, red arm in commanding gesture, and then again, amidst almost breathless silence, Thunder Hawk began to speak.

What he said no man within the little fort could tell. What he meant no soul could doubt, for at the very first pause there burst from the lips of his war dogs a cry almost blood-curdling in its ferocity, and, under a canopy of brandishing lance and shield and rifle the great mass began to heave and sway as the half-maddened ponies pranced and curvetted and tugged at their bridle bits in wild impatience for the charge. But again he checked them and signalled silence. Again the deep, sonorous voice rang and resounded

across the mile-wide valley, and then, still speaking, he gave rein to his steed, and, erect, commanding, massive, far out where all could see him, rode slowly down along the front of his line and gradually sank into the shadows of the eastward bluff still thrown athwart the plain. The horse he rode was a spirited gray, doubtless one of those captured from the escort of the mysterious wagon stage, and this added to his imposing stature. Arrived opposite the center of his line he once more faced his warriors, now again in a tumult of shouting, once again brandished over his head the long, feathered lance, then whirled his powerful horse about, and with one startling and terrific whoop, laid his stinging lash across the quivering flank and darted forward in headlong charge.

Then on they came—four hundred fighting men in thundering rush at the grim redoubt, yelling like so many demons loosed from hell, their nimble-footed ponies stretched in mad race for the lead, their wild trappings streaming in the wind, their line unswerving as the squadron front of the finest cavalry afield, straight for the silent circle of the fort they

rode full five hundred yards without break or fault or waver, a sight to strike terror to the heart unused to savage warfare. Straight and swift and terrible in force and fury they came until the little smoke jets began to leap from the low parapet, until the Springfields began to speak, and then the huge gray in the lead seemed suddenly to swerve and veer and stumble and then plunge crashing down upon the turf, hurling his red rider headlong before him, there to be seized, raised and swung across the back of circling pony and swept off out of harm's way to the rear, and then what had been a compact force broke and scattered into scores of separate squads and groups and even single warriors, darting, circling, swooping, yelling ever and yet rarely venturing so close to the fire-flashing parapet as to make sure the next shot of the defense. Every now and then some pony would go down, some warrior be flung to earth, instantly to be gathered up and spirited away, but with the stunning fall of their magnificent leader the soul and spirit of the grand attack drifted away before the cool and deadly aim of the defense. Ten minutes of terrific din and, de-

spite the wild rain of fire from the wide circling foe, the stirring fight was over, the charging warriors had withdrawn beyond long rifle range, and a shout of joy and triumph was rising from within the little fort where Kent, the wearied surgeon, was bending over the prostrate form of the young commander, stanching the blood that welled from a new and desperate wound.

Late that afternoon, as from some wild dream and in the midst of shoutings and stirring trumpet calls and the thunder of shod horses upon the prairie sod, Emslie wearily opened his eyes to see a laughing, winsome, baby face peering down into his own, to see a tear-wet, lovely woman face looking into his with joy, relief and gratitude unspeakable, to see with them the kindly features of the honored old chaplain side by side with the haggard yet rejoicing face of Kent, to hear the joyous words: "He's coming back to us all right, God bless him! Aren't you, Emslie?" and then to see beyond these a little group of war-worn, dust covered men—was he dreaming still?—Black Bill, the stalwart colonel, clasping hands with the almost tear-

ful major, and then vaguely still to hear in Bill's sonorous chest tones the never to be forgotten words:

"Tennant, old fellow, I congratulate you, sir, on your heroic—your magnificent defense."

CHAPTER IX.

As told in the press of the day the story of that episode of Indian warfare was something more than thrilling. The long and fearful strain, the overwhelming force of the Cheyennes, the desperate losses of Tennant's little band of heroes, the reduction of the defense to their very last cartridge after the final and furious attack of Thunder Hawk and his myriad bands, the desperate plight of the wounded, the awful fate that might have befallen that sweet, delicately nurtured woman, and then the warning brought Colonel Briggs across miles of Indian infested country, the long, tireless, yet exhausting march to the rescue, and the triumphant relief of the little garrison when at the last ebb of their hope and endurance—all these were things that filled the columns, news and editorial, for many a day. The meeting between the two commanders, "those war-worn veterans of a score of bloody

fields," as pictured by the two correspondents with the cavalry column and the pencils of our special artists on the spot, was "a thing to move to tears the stoutest heart." And we who were not there and could only read and marvel and believe and give thanks—we others in distant camps and garrisons throughout the widely scattered little army—filled our cups to the brim and emptied them to the bottom in honor of Briggs and old Tennant, and envied Hone and Bob Emslie and Britton their prospective brevets—(which came some thirty years later, and to one grade below instead of above the rank then held by the sole survivor)—if we didn't covet their wounds, for Hone long lay an invalid and never regained his strength, and not for weeks and months did we learn the inside history of that most plucky and determined stand against appalling odds.

To begin with Tennant was summoned to department headquarters at Fort Leavenworth, there to receive the congratulations of the major general commanding, and from thence went farther eastward, on leave, to recuperate and accept the greetings of his fellow citi-

zens and the freedom of his native city, and of course it wasn't expected of Tennant that he should enter into particulars concerning the siege. The true hero modestly avoids such subjects. Then Briggs, having gone on after the discomfited Cheyennes, like the good soldier he was, had not time to hear half or the hundredth part of the half of what had happened, so he could not be expected to report the real facts. Indeed it was not through military channels at all that the truth began to come to light. It was when an outspoken engineer, with an equally outspoken little wife, was brought back to Illinois to wear well of his wounds, and through the officials of the great railway in whose interests he had been conducting the surveys far west of its westward terminus at the time, that the actual details of the siege were given to the press, and then there was a bobbery worth the chronicling.

When the Chicago papers reached Fort Leavenworth, giving in full the story of the three days' battle on the Lancewood as told by Mr. Donald McAlister, C. E., it is remembered that Major General Sheridan's eyes

popped nearly out of their sockets, and that certain words escaped him that were not recorded—sulphuric acid was the mildest fluid that could have been used for the purpose. But telegraphic summons went forthwith to Fort Pawnee requiring the immediate presence at the post of the chaplain and Dr. Kent. Another brought Lieutenant Britton from Fort Hays, while a trusted aide-de-camp was sent to Wallace where, still sorely hurt, yet slowly mending, lay Captain Hone and brave Bob Emslie. The first apparent result of the interview that followed was the summoning of the Judge Advocate of the department with the charges and specifications preferred against Second Lieutenant Robert J. Emslie, —th Cavalry, and Corporal Frank Chester, Troop "D," same regiment. These two documents were ripped into fragments by the irate and impetuous chief, and to this day Emslie knows not of just what enormities he stood accused. A sorely vexed man had Sheridan been for as much as a fortnight, for here were two cases that tried him more than they ever did the accused. He loved a soldier, and here were two of his best,—the officer reported in so

many words as having connived at the escape of a prisoner confided to his care, and the corporal, "wanted" by the civil authorities and held at Fort Hays under double charges, those of manslaughter and desertion. Yet that officer, as he now learned, was the real hero of the defense after Hone was shot, and that soldier was the man who, braving death at the hands of the Indians and arrest and trial by both civil and military authorities, had dared to gallop day and night from Rawson's ranch, where that old soldier was hiding him "till the thing blew over." The amaze of Black Bill was simply immense when an exhausted horse and well-nigh exhausted rider reached his bivouac on the Beaver with news that the Cheyennes had doubled on him and besieged Hone's camp on the Lancewood. "How do you know?" was his instant demand, in reply to which the courier fumbled at his breast pocket a moment and then, as he drew forth a soiled paper, fairly fainted away. Briggs had no use for the average plainsmen as authority for Indian rumors, but Rawson had served years with him in Texas before the war and later in Virginia. What Rawson said was

gospel and Rawson's ill-written scrawl was about as follows:—

"COL. BRIGGS:—Thunder Hock and 5 hunderd Chiens are back at Big Bend. You cant get thar to quick if you want to save them wounded and the wimmin. They gobbled the Denver stage and scalped 5 of the gray troops fellers all but Bill Winters who was with us at Sanantone in 56. He broke threw with a busted arm and a whole in his leg that Ive got to take care of or Ida come myself. Young Chester is hot to go and I let him. Say Col. you want to let up on that young feller if he makes the trip alrite. Ida shot that son of a skunk myself.

"Yours to command,

"JAMES RAWSON."

"Dear Col. you must hurry."

It was this unimpeachable document that decided Black Bill against his own views, and for all he was worth and with his best troopers, the colonel rode for the Lancewood, leaving the slow or weakening horses, with the few sick and sore men, the packs and supplies under sufficient escort to follow him. He rode many miles at the trot and gallop, was in sight of the Lancewood bluffs by sun up of that eventful Sunday, and seen by Thunder Hawk's

wary scouts long before he got within striking distance. The red warriors drew away into the hills at his approach and from afar looked on at a scene that beggars description —the relief of the beleagured camp. By nightfall, with horses fed, watered, groomed and fairly rested, he was again on the trail and so missed one of the most romantic episodes of the entire affair.

It was his theory that Chester had undertaken that desperate ride in the hope that, if successful, he might secure a recommendation for pardon, and of course Briggs meant to intercede in the young soldier's behalf at the proper time. He was astonished then to find that, despite exhaustion and weakness, Chester had mounted a fresh horse after an hour or so in the doctor's hands, and riding at the gallop, had overtaken the column. His feverish impatience on the march and mad anxiety concerning the "wounded and the wimmen" was noted by dozens of men. He had to be ordered back into the column and placed under charge of the guard to keep him from spurring ahead, and when at last the camp was sighted, its little flag still flying, and the

Indians scattering to the westward bluffs, he seemed well nigh frenzied with excitement, and when they rode splashing through the stream, and the word was passed that the women were safe, he collapsed entirely, fainting dead away.

Some men thought him unnerved by the dreadful sight presented by the naked and mutilated bodies of two white men in a ravine beside the charred remains of the wagon—all that was left of the Denver stage, declared by Cassidy to be "the General's," and that mysterious vehicle with its unlooked for escort was now explained. Cassidy, at least, had believed much that he said, and it was exactly what the Indians planned should be believed by the defense. It was indeed a shrewd trick! The stage with its single passenger and its luckless guard of a sergeant and six men of the Grays, had been jumped by an overwhelming force at Carson's Springs. Trooper Winters alone succeeded in breaking away and reaching Rawson's with the news. Then, tumbling their wretched prisoners into the stage, some exultant young braves gleefully donned the uniforms and equipments of the troopers,

mounted their grays, and ran the stage over to the Lancewood for all the world as though it were bringing some officer of rank. The dark faces at the distance would be mistaken for those of the "brunettes" of the Tenth Cavalry from Fort Lyon. Thunder Hawk and his band would counterfeit an ambuscade, and the garrison, they hoped, would be lured out of their defenses to the open prairie in attempt to save. Then they could be surrounded and slowly massacred. Then camp and further captives would be at the mercy of the conquerers. But Hone knew his duty and unerringly foresaw the fate of any command he might lead beyond his lines. So that scheme failed, and the poor survivors of the escort met their death by fire and torture beyond hope or possibility of help.

All this, and much more, developed in the course of the days that followed before the surgeons, with ambulances and additional guards, got out from the railway and began the transfer of the wounded to Fort Wallace. Most important of all, in the eyes of many an army wife and daughter in the scattering forts of the wide frontier, was the thrilling inci-

dent, told with dramatic force by the chaplain and retold, time and again, in social circles at Lyon and Wallace and Hays and Larned, at Riley and Leavenworth and even as far east as Rock Island and Chicago, where the McAlisters had hosts of friends, where as May Brandon she had been an acknowledged belle and beauty. It is a pity that in the Dominie's own "winged words" it cannot now be told, but briefly it was as follows:—

Just at sunset of that wonderful day, while the gallant defenders slept the sleep of exhaustion and Mrs. McAlister and Baby May, with the wounded husband and father, were being made comfortable as possible in the little wall tent, a soldier was carried by in his blanket and laid at the water's edge. "Is he, too, so badly wounded?" asked the young wife, her soft eyes full of sympathy.

"No, ma'am," was the answer of one of the bearers. "That's Chester,—him that took the news to Colonel Briggs and brought the cavalry here. He's just—used up, I reckon."

With clumsy, but willing hands the soldiers were sprinkling water on the pallid brow and striving to revive him. Setting little May on

the turf beside Emslie's litter, where that stricken young athlete smiled feebly upon the wondering baby face, Mrs. McAlister hastened to join them. "Let me help you," she cried. "What do we not owe this splendid fellow?" And throwing herself upon her knees beside the prostrate man, bent, looked upon the worn features, then started to her feet with a cry of amaze, anguish and recognition. "Donald —husband—O heaven, it's Frank Craven, and he's died to save us!"

CHAPTER X.

But Frank Craven, erstwhile of Illinois, and later corporal of cavalry in far Colorado, had not died, nor did he die for many a year. But a wondrous story did it make when, little by little, the facts came drifting back to army firesides, and women's eyes filled with tears as they discussed it. Frank Craven had been for long May Brandon's shadow, had given her all the ardor of a boy's love, had believed the frank, innocent liking she had ever felt for him—the girlish preference for a village beau, —would reward his long devotion in the end and become a love that could answer his own. Perhaps it might have been so: He was handsome, impulsive, but unstable and certainly young,—too near her own years to command the reverent love she thought the due of the man whom she should call husband. Then came Don McAlister, a strong, virile, commanding character, a rising man in his profes-

sion,—Donald with his rugged Scotch features and his stalwart frame, and though it "grieved her sair" to see Frank Craven's misery, she soon found her heart bound up in this big, dominant engineer who wooed her so masterfully. It was McAlister who won; Craven who lost, and for months no word was heard from the latter. He had "gone to make his fortune and forget her," said the other girls, but apparently he had done neither, for here he was, wearing the yellow worsted chevron in the service of Uncle Sam, and wearing his life out, very nearly, in successful effort to save her.

"What a romance it would have made," said the folks at the forts, if not at home, "if McAlister had died of his wounds and Chester Craven had won her at last!" But it all turned out otherwise,—all turned out for the sobersided best as, long years afterwards, all who lived to remember lived to admit, for the battle of the Lancewood had its romance after all.

Bent on punishing the Cheyennes, Black Bill, as has been said, had remained at the rejoicing camp only long enough to bait his

horses and dictate his brief report of the rescue of what, in strict accord with military usage, he described as "Major Tennant's party," and the major, of course, had written his report as the casual commander on the spot. "I have to deplore," said the latter, "the loss of several gallant men who died that others might live, and to report the serious condition of their heroic captain, Hone, desperately wounded early in the action,—a casualty that deprived me of the services of this most loyal officer, but I take pleasure in announcing that the wounds of Lieutenants Emslie and Britton are far less severe, and in commending the gallantry of these young gentlemen as well as that of our worthy chaplain under most trying circumstances."

Modesty, let us assume, was all that stood in the way of any reference to his own deeds, and Tennant's report was considered quite a gem in its way until the railway men and the surveyors got back to the road and began to free themselves of their impressions. Meantime, however, another hero had turned up at Mona,—two of them, in fact,—in the persons of Cassidy, the driver, and Kansas, the

scout, and the frontier town was full of tales of how they had run the gauntlet through the Indian lines, periling their lives, daring death by slow torture, that they might carry the news to the nearest troops and lead a force to the rescue. They did reach the Antelope, it seems, after what were described as incredibly harrowing adventures and escapes, but not until hours after Chester had sent the field column to the succor of the camp, and the reason they gave for not remaining at the Antelope was unflattering to the troop there stationed. Dan and Kansas swore they were afraid to stir out of their stockades, although it transpired that most of the troop was out and pushing by road for the Lancewood. Those that remained within, however, were without whiskey, which the pair decided a desideratum, and so pushed on for Rawson's, and eventually to Mona, which they occupied in force until the survivors and the wounded began to arrive. Then both had business elsewhere.

For young Stauffer, taking courage at last, had told his story, clearly proving that Cassidy was hand in glove with the Mona gang, and that Chester's plea of self-defense was more

than justified. Stauffer had been employed in the very saloon where the gamblers had their "layout," and knew their secrets and saw the whole affair. Then his own life was threatened by the desperadoes and he vanished from Mona and took refuge with the surveyors, only to have their camp jumped by Indians. No wonder the lad was nearly crazed.

But his story ended all local claim for the surrender of Chester, and the possibility of further proceedings against either him or his gallant officer. Even the sheriff couldn't be found when the troops reached Mona, nor could any of the witnesses who were so glib the month gone by. "D" Troop had no search warrant, and asked none, but the search was exhaustive as Dan well knew it would be, hence his flight. There was a warrant out for Chester, alias Craven, as soon as he was able to bestride a horse again, but it came from regimental headquarters, not from Mona, and doubled the width of his chevrons and dubbed him sergeant.

"What am I to do for him, Lieutenant?" asked the convalescent engineer, of Bob Emslie, the former perched upon his crutches, the

latter stretched in his breezy tent, a fond and devoted mother now seated by his cot and worshiping her boy as much as she nursed, as mothers will. The McAlisters were to take train for home that very evening, and while wife and baby were lavishing caresses on Mrs. Emslie, the brawny Scot had seized the chance for a word concerning Chester.

Emslie knew or divined much of the story by this time. "Thank him any way you wish," said he, "but don't tempt him to quit the army. That man will make his mark with us; he couldn't with you."

"At least you will keep an eye on him, and we will hear through you, Emslie, for—for—" and evident was it that big McAlister's big heart was full to overflowing, for his eyes, his clasping hand, his very awkwardness showed it. The pent up words came at last with a rush. "You—you've saved to me everything I loved in life, laddie—everything I had in the world, and *all* our lives we'll pray for ye and love ye and bless ye, Bob Emslie—won't we, May?"

The slanting sunshine of the late afternoon was streaming into the roomy hospital tent,

crowning that blue-eyed baby girl with an aureole of light, as Mrs. Emslie, with brimming lids, bent down and set Queen Baby upon the cot beside the wounded boy. Instantly her little majesty, scorning all concealment of her preference, threw herself upon Bob's neck and nestled in the clasping arm, her pretty, dimpled mites of hands, her pudgy little fingers burrowing into his curly hair and tugging lustily at her new-found prize. "She's taking seizin' of ye, Robert. Ye're a doomed man!" laughed big McAlister, in his delight.

"She's taking my scalp sure enough," grinned Emslie. "It's coming with the hair."

"Oh! Oh! Naughty, naughty!" exclaimed Mrs. Mac, with reproachful tone and uplifted finger. "Mamma's darling mustn't pull Mr. Emslie's hair—No, no!" But "mamma's darling" had views and a will of her own, and Emslie afforded the way. Gripping the short, crisp curls with determined little fists, one on each side and crowing delightedly, Miss May next proceeded to burrow with her radiant, rounded, baby face into the sprouting down on Bob's sun-tanned cheek; then, pursing her infant lips, hung over him, studying

her new-found captive, with rejoiceful, triumphant eyes.

"Well, I declare, Mr. Emslie," cried beaming Mrs. McAlister, "you're the very first man that child ever offered to kiss of her accord."

"Bless her heart!" was the laughing, yet fervent reply. "May she never get over it!"

CHAPTER XI.

All this happened in the brave old days when, with eager, hopeful eyes the emigrant and the settler were pushing their way across the boundless prairies of the then far West,—when Pike's Peak seemed as distant as is Mauna Loa now, and the long road to the grand range of the Rockies took more days to traverse than the hours in which we run it to-day. Pioneers of settlement and civilization, the little army covered the wide front, striving to protect the rights, the person and property of both invader and invaded, ever fighting the battle of the weak against the strong, and often being heartily abused by both, for, whatsoever might have been the views of the honest farmer and ranchman, the average hanger-on at the outskirts of civilization held that the Indian had no rights the white man was bound to respect. The Indian hated the white man accordingly, and, in his

hatred, lacked discrimination; in his vengeance he was no respecter of persons. Fearful, therefore, had been the scenes and the sufferings that went hand in hand with that march of civilization. Every mile post of the transcontinental lines was matched by the headboard of some victim killed in battle along the way, and many a busy station stands to-day upon the scene of some desperate and often hopeless fight for life against merciless odds.

In spite of all this the white man forced his path—the Indian, the buffalo, the coyote falling before him. So, too, like drift wood at the edge of flooding torrent, went the human wolves,—the gamblers and roughs, the shoot-at-sight element that terrorized the feeble and the timid. Far into the mountains and beyond they fled before the searchlight of the locomotive, for the railway is the great civilizer, and thus it happened that time and again were the advance guards of both, the little army of the frontier and the great army of the railway world, brought into close relations in the decade that saw the building of the continental lines and the rapid opening of the West. And so it happened that men like McAlister came

to know at their best the soldiers of our fighting force, and to hold them in far higher esteem than did so many of the old folks at home. Time and again about their happy, peaceful fireside did May McAlister tell to friends and kindred the story of the siege,—all, that is, except the way poor Frank Craven rode through miles of peril to turn the cavalry to the rescue. Of that, only when closely questioned, as closely question the best of women sometimes will, could she be made to speak, and then, with blushes uncontrollable, to insist that it was Craven's sense of gratitude to his lieutenant—to Mr. Emslie, who had befriended him at the risk of court-martial, that prompted his daring effort. It was of Emslie and the chaplain and young Britton and the soldiers the blue-eyed little woman would talk for hours and appeal to little May for confirmation, and almost the first word framed by those pretty, rosy, baby lips was their young hero's brief, blunt, pet name "Bob." In the catalogue of the child's domestic deities only two preceded it, and her earliest prattle was of the young officer whose photograph came at Christmas time, and was

wreathed with holly and crowned with blessing and might, indeed, have been hung with mistletoe such was the admiration it created among dames and damsels at home. "Why aren't you here, Bob, where a whole township is ready to welcome you with open arms?" wrote little Mrs. Mac, in her enthusiasm, and Bob at first didn't show that letter to the devoted mother who was keeping house for him through the bleak winter at Fort Wallace. Not until she asked to see it did her big boy hand it over, and start forthwith for stables, though the call would not sound for full ten minutes.

Oh, she expected it all! And, proud though she was of the name her boy had won, and angry though she would have been had the McAlisters and their kindred failed to accord him all honor and credit and to love him as he deserved to be loved, still she would have them love him as something sacred to her—a being to be longed for, perhaps, but still beyond their reach. And I protest that through no fear of what she might have to lose in the queendom of his home was the mother disturbed and jealous, but of what it might cost

her to lose the foremost place that she had ever held, and like many a mother, thought still to hold in the big, brave heart of her stalwart soldier boy. Who could blame her? Husband and one son she had lost already. The pretty, petulant child that had been the father's spoiled darling and her brother's special care, had long since, too, been taken. Bob was all that was left her, and the few girls in army garrisons well knew the way to his heart was barred, and all the more delighted in tempting him and tormenting her.

Many a half rueful, half whimsical word had those born match-makers of the army over Bob Emslie's environment. Until the winter that followed his severe wound he had almost lived in saddle, the field and the mountain, whither the mother could not follow. But neither could they, the temptresses, so the mother was content to abide in the far East, but more than one consideration sent her hurrying westward when Bob was brought back to Wallace wounded. Most natural was her longing to be with him in his weary hours of pain. Most human was her fear lest any other woman, especially a young one, should

be there instead of her. As the good lady explained to many a caller that winter, it cost her heavily to quit the cozy little cottage at the seashore, leaving everything to be packed or purloined by servants, and to come all those miles to the bedside of her wounded son. Some satirists were wicked enough to say she never started until the papers told of Mrs. Mac's sweet blue eyes and fair young face and the intensity of her gratitude to the brave officer. Then the situation had become indeed alarming. She need not have feared, dear lady. May McAlister had but one heart and it was wrapped up in her big Donald and her little May, but those who best love us, as Thackeray has pointed out, are the first to suspect, and it was well for all that the McAlisters left for home within two days of Mrs. Emslie's coming. A *grande dame* of the old army she had been, an authority in many a garrison before this, and was an object of awe, if not all of reverence in the years that swiftly followed. It was rich to hear the story of her reception of Black Bill when the colonel *had* to stop at Wallace to see Emslie. There was no way out of it. He and Bob

could have come to an understanding quickly, for each was a soldier and keenly alive to what was best and most soldierly in the other. But the widow of Lieutenant Colonel Briggs' once-upon-a-time commanding officer had a rod in pickle for the man who could misjudge and misuse Major General Emslie's eldest son. The awful ceremonies between these two veterans of the buff and buckram days of the service were things never to be forgotten of those who saw and heard. Even the general commanding the department shirked a stop at Wallace that winter. Not that he didn't wish to see Emslie and take him by the hand, but because of what the dowager might see fit to say anent that first official publication concerning the battle of the Lancewood. As for poor old Tennant, it was well for him his lines were ordered in other places, and that they never met this side of the Styx. Mrs. Emslie would have crushed him with elaborate and excruciating civility.

Indeed the fond, jealous soul need have had no fear of losing Bob, for little though he ever said to her or to others, there was ever uppermost in his heart the duty he owed to her in

her widowhood and to the father in his honored grave. If the general's dying words had been "Let your mother's comfort be your first consideration," Bob Emslie could not more loyally have devoted himself to her care and service. Long before his graduation he realized that the few hundreds his father had scraped together would soon be gone, that there would only be the little pension, and that the mother's main dependence would be her soldier son. It was this thought far more than any lack of the appreciation of the charms of womanhood that held him aloof from any entanglement. "Emslie isn't a marrying man," said the regiment, after his third year on the plains. The wonder was that with all his care for her he was so keen for hazardous service. Up to the day of Black Bill's start from the Lancewood the gallant fellow had never missed a scout with his troop, and then what had been devised as a rebuke and punishment had resulted to his high and lasting credit. Bob Emslie had won Sheridan's enthusiastic regard, and that meant almost everything.

But the bubble reputation does not provide

goods and chattels. The soldier who has it not is in better estate than he who has it. A record for having done tiptop work on such a scout or in such a fight leads to many another chance of death or glory, keeps a fellow forever afield and permits him to gather neither rust nor moss. Much as she might tremble for her son's safety in the stirring campaigns that accompanied the winning of the West, Mrs. Emslie was a soldier's wife and knew the duties of a soldier's mother. Besides, when Bob was riding the trail or the war-path he was beyond the reach of feminine wiles. Ever in danger of Indian bullet or arrow, he was safe at least from Cupid's darts, and there were women who did not scruple to say Mrs. Emslie would rather have him massacred than married.

The fortunes of war that had brought them in such close relations soon separated Bob and his devoted friends the McAlisters, but with his strong Scotch tenacity, Donald clung to his faith, and with constant nursing kept it warm. Lancewood, added to native ability, sterling worth and professional skill, sent him skyward in the books of the great company

he served, and in five years' time he had been promoted from one grade to another, and stood so close to the throne in his department that he was enabled practically to reward the men who had saved his loved ones from a fate of horror. By the time the great bridge was built across the Missouri, Mac's soldier *protegés* in the service of the road had become, I fear, more numerous than useful, while the list of ex-sergeants, corporals and privates for whom he besought passes was something the general manager declared paralleled only by the pension list of the general government. But the road could stand it, said McAlister, who was prospering as the years and the trains rolled on, and only once came the grim reminder that Lancewood left the fires of hate, as well as of love and gratitude, still burning.

It was at the close of the Centennial—the year that Colorado's star took its place in the constellation of the Union. The troops were drifting in, a battalion or a squadron at a time, from the fierce campaign against Sitting Bull and his braves. Bob Emslie and his troop, after long service in Arizona, had marched

and fought and scouted all over the wide lands of the Big Horn and the Yellowstone and, worn to skin and bone, came in to the railway for a winter's recuperation, only to be hurried by rail to look after a recalcitrant band in southern Colorado. With Bob rode an officer about his own age who had received his commission only the previous year, Craven, his second lieutenant, who had served two enlistments as a sergeant before winning the prized parchment of the war office. The McAlisters at the time were wintering in Topeka. It brought Mac closer to the scene of new and important surveys, and Mrs. Mac and the children had gone there with him. "Come to us for Christmas, both of you," he had written, "or the mother and I can never be content. As for Dot, she'll never forgive you."

Dot, it seems, was the pet name decided on by that imperious little maid, now eight years of age, who had announced that one May was quite enough in the family, and Dot had set her heart on having her soldiers with her Christmas tree. "Can you go?" asked Emslie, of his junior, dubiously. Craven's face clouded a bit.

"I could, possibly, though old Bill said I shouldn't have leave, but—"

"Craven held on duty," wired Emslie who, fancy free through force of circumstances, had wise theories of his own as to the moth and candle business. Despite the fact that May Brandon McAlister was now mother of four bonnie bairns and growing matronly, if not stout, she was a wondrously pretty and winsome woman. It were just as well that Craven did not singe his wings still further, and so, leaving him to run the troop, Bob took train for Topeka and his Christmas dinner.

The snow was sifting gently into the deep ravines and over the bare, rolling uplands as they wound away northward into the night. The wind, for a wonder, had blown itself out, and the evening was still and placid. Only a few hundred miles by rail, thought Bob, as he looked from the window over the white streaked foothills, turning gray in the gloaming. There would be a joyous day or two with the Macs, then a month with that impatient mother in the distant East, then he would hasten back to the troop and Craven could have his leave, only Craven would be

wise to go directly East instead of stopping off at Topeka. Craven had not looked too happy as he bade him goodbye. Craven had explained his solemnity by saying he had been jostled and impudently stared at by three tough-looking strangers while Emslie was in the telegraph office,—one of them he seemed to have seen before. They had slouched away up the track as Emslie reappeared, two brother officers with him, yet not so soon but that Emslie had noticed them and noticed in one, at least, a vaguely familiar form.

But before the train reached Colorado Springs he had forgotten the trio, and was surprised, therefore, after a cup of coffee at the clean little dining-room, to see the same trio hovering about the outskirts of the throng on the platform. Moreover, as he returned toward the rear of the train he became aware that they were intently, yet covertly, regarding him. More than that, two of them suddenly started forward as though to accost him as, all alone, he was strolling toward his car, when the third gave a sharp, hissing whistle, and the conductor, with a brakeman beside him, each with his lantern, came bustling through the crowd,

and swung their lamps with scant ceremony in the very faces of the three. Emslie paid little heed to what was said. In two minutes the train moved on. The conductor soon came into the car and, after looking over the passengers picked up from Manitou, handed Emslie a telegram. It was addressed to himself, care of Conductor on No. 3. It said in so many words: "Be on your guard. Gang aboard made threats here and mean mischief. Conductor warned." And it came from Craven.

"Warning you against those toughs, aren't they?" asked the official. "I've got a similar tip. Why should they be after you?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Emslie. "They are total strangers."

"Got a gun?" queried the man of the West.

"Never carry one except on campaign."

"Well, you ought to! They might have jumped you before any of us were warned. As it is I'll give the tip to one or two men aboard with us. Meantime, just keep your eyes open."

A word to his brakeman, who had sprawled on the rear seat, and he was gone. Five min-

utes later the front door opened. Two burly fellows came lurching down the aisle, paying no heed to the half dozen passengers, principally women, scattered about, but at sight of Emslie, in his undress uniform, book in hand, placidly reading under the light, the foremost stopped short, leered down into the officer's face, and then speaking thickly, turned to his partner.

"I thought the war was over, Billy," said he, "but b'god, here's a lieutenant."

And as Emslie slowly lifted his eyes to meet the bleary orbs above, there, hovering in the dim light on the front platform and peering furtively through the glass, he saw a face that told the story in the flash of a second. Heavens, how he mourned now the bullet that had smashed his shoulder at the Lancewood and ended his boxing days forever! Ride, shoot and scout he could as well as ever, but never again send a left swing home with the crushing force that felled that blackguard driver years ago. And they knew it, these ruffians, as the next words proved.

"Why, I'm damned if it ain't that cocky young cuss that used to be so handy with his

fists at Mona. Get up, sonny, and let's see if you can use yer mawlies now."

There was sudden stir and excitement in the car. Women began to shrink and whimper. Two men promptly ducked under the seats. The brakeman came quickly up the aisle, only to be met by a leveled six shooter, and the savage order, "Get back there, damn you!" And he, too, ducked. It was the only thing to do. The front door flew open and the third hulking, heavy figure burst headlong in, but there was something behind it, the gold-banded cap of the conductor, with another brakeman, and men at their back. Emslie's left was toward the ruffians. Even if he had been on even terms—and his feet—he could have planted no blow therewith, but with sudden spring he leaped to the seat itself, and without a second's falter, sent a vicious kick straight at the pistol hand of the threatening bully. The Colt went crashing through the opposite window. Somebody came leaping over a form that dove headlong into the aisle, and the conductor hurled himself upon Emslie's would-be assailants, while two others jumped upon the down-fallen stranger, and in

less time than it takes to tell it, three ruffians were being hustled toward the rear platform as, in answer to an imperative jerk of the bell cord, the train came jarring and bumping to a stand. "Get away their guns!" was the conductor's order. "See't they've nothing left to shoot with. Now, then, heave 'em off!"

And out into the soft falling snow and the white carpet of the Colorado prairie bounced three despoiled, disgusted and blaspheming toughs; the last one off, and the last one heard, as once more the train moved blithely on, no less a personage than Dan Cassidy himself, bereft even of his flask, for a heartless fellow citizen had prudently smashed it over the quondam driver's luckless head. It was the last appearance on the stage of famous Denver Dan.

CHAPTER XII.

Long years—another decade—rolled by, bringing many a change in *dramatis personae* and new, strange features to the scene of the thrilling drama played to that stirring close in the Lancewood valley. The Road that sent its surveyors probing a pathway to the Rockies had long since followed with its tentacles of steel, binding East and West together in bonds like those of Roman fasces, that turned scattered factors into coherent mass. Spurning long leagues of prairie from their flashing tires, spanning mountain gorges, bridging roaring torrents, bursting through black miles of granite, its gleaming trains shot to and fro, whirling the traveler from the sandy shores of Michigan to the grandeur and beauty of the Garden of the Gods.

Men who had tugged at rod and chain and blinked through transit and level in the old days, figuring their westward way with pencil

in one hand and pistol in the other, sat at seventh story windows in great office buildings above the rush and whirl of the thronging street, planning the further path of civilization or the daily routine of an army of employes that far exceeded in numbers their old-time comrades of the army of the frontier. Massive in form as ever, rugged in face and feature, gray sprinkled as to hair and beard, big Don. McAlister, long since become chief engineer, presided over the destinies of a great department in his own road, even while called into consultation by corporations all over the land. Magnate that he was in the profession, his was but a limited monarchy at home, for there a bonnie housewife held sway, even though the unquestioned chieftain of the clan, the idol and pride of McAlister's heart, the imperious ruler of the domestic hearth, the alternate delight and torment of her adoring mother, was May, Junior, alias "Dot" to a limited few, a maid of eighteen, born on the banks of the island-dotted Mississippi, bred in the West, schooled in the East, traveled in foreign lands, but not until she had traversed her own, (with what wondrous joy had Mac

piloted her through the busy streets of his native Aberdeen!) and now a fair-haired, fair skinned, blue-eyed beauty, the "eldest hope" of the man who had run the Road from the Missouri to Manitou, reclaimed the flats of Denver, irrigated Pueblo and a dozen outlying counties, making indeed "the desert to blossom like the rose,"—who had drained the Cimmarron mine, converting much watered stock into more solid cash, the man, in fine, who, entering service with a "saxpence" in the Sixties, paid taxes on a moderate fortune two decades later. May McAlister's "coming out" after the second coming home from abroad was the social event in the suburban world, and of those who graced the occasion none had more joyous welcome than a venerable churchman, bowed with years, and a keen-faced, dark-eyed, gray-mustached soldier doctor, to both of whom did Dot extend both dainty hands in enthusiastic greeting. There was a tall captain of cavalry who wore, when in full uniform, the medal of honor awarded him for a deed of heroism in risking his life through an Indian infested country, riding to bring rescue to a beleaguered command "while

serving as Corporal in Troop 'D,' —th Cavalry," and with the captain came Mrs. Craven, a decidedly dashing brunette, tall, slender, elegant of figure, whom Mrs. Mac, half a head shorter and half a yard rounder, a buxom, winsome, wholesome, happy woman withal, welcomed with much *empressement,* and watched with flitting, flashing side glances—those instantaneous views that enable women to estimate another's costume and character in the fraction of a second—and referred to later as looking as though she might have a will of her own.

Yet that was something she adored in her own daughter.

One drawback there was to the general rejoicing. Captain Bob Emslie from somewhere out across the continent, had sent his regrets, a local florist sending his roses. There was trouble brewing, said he, between the miners and the Navajoes, and he was the only officer with his troop. In vain had Don protested. "You're a martyr to your profession, Bob," wrote he. "I'm no saying but what you've won a fine name and all that, but what then? Here you are, after slaving a quarter of a cen-

tury through all manner of scrapes and skirmishes, content with a captaincy and twenty-five hundred a year, when, if you'd given to any other calling anything like the zeal and industry you've thrown into this buckram business of being anybody's kick and nobody's kin, you'd have been a man of substance with a position in the world, a fine home for the mother and your own for the wife and bairnies that ought to be. I've no patience with you, Robert. May says no man living has a right to be forty and a bachelor—and you're both."

He was reading that letter over one day, long weeks later, away out in the heart of the grandest scenery of our continent. About him towered the Rockies—the friendly peaks under whose shelter he had so often found his soldier pillow. Beside the narrow trail rushed and foamed a magnificent torrent—one of the mountain streams that have made Colorado famous. He rode in the midst of Nature's glories, yet his heart was weary within him. A renegade tribe had called him and his troop to action. It was the same old story of alleged wrongs and savage vengeance. Then, their duty done, he and his men might return

to their station and deserved rest, but—for how long? Year in and year out, how little change, how little rest or respite!—the saddle his home by day, his pillow by night; Nature his book; his horse his boon companion; his troop his children, and wife he had none! There were lines now at the corners of the keen gray eyes and little strands of gray in the crisp, yet thinning curls and in the tawny, sweeping, trooper mustache. There were furrows in the gaunt, sun-tanned throat, and the cheeks, though bronzed, seemed hollow. Yet a splendid type was Bob of the American cavalry leader, seasoned and hardened through long cycles of service in that life-giving air of the West,—massive in shoulder, chest and thigh, but lean in flank despite the broadening that comes with two score years. In his regiment he had become an oracle, looked up to by his juniors with wordless faith and confidence, looked upon by many of his seniors with secret jealousy, by army wives, mothers and matchmakers as an intractable, by his troop as little less than a divinity. "General Miles may be all right," said Sergeant Larkin, in discussing the capture of Geronimo, the

last of the line of Chiricahua chiefs in rebellion, "but where would he have been without the Old Man?" To them, indeed, "The Old Man" outclassed the greatest general ever known. They wondered he hadn't been made a general for the Geronimo campaign, yet were ever dreading he might be, for then what would happen to the troop with the Old Man gone?

But this matchless day, as he rode through the winding cañon, his soldier sense of duty had been sorely tried. Galloping hard from the railway, a courier had borne him a despatch telling him in cautious words that the beloved mother was fast failing. She was too old, she had said, to attend the coming out party for which the McAlisters had made such preparation, but the physician's letter had given Emslie no cause for alarm. Her declining years had been surrounded with every comfort his care and devotion could give, and, as it had become impossible for her to go with him from pillar to post, he had found for her a pretty home near the sea, with congenial old friends and fellow campaigners, and thither whenever possible he had made his annual

pilgrimage to bring her cheer and to receive her blessing. Even at forty he was still her boy. This spring her letters had caused him some anxiety. She seemed so eager for his coming then instead of waiting until fall, yet would not urge, because she knew the troop must be afield,—and how could it go without Bob?

And now as he came marching in from the long, hot, exhausting chase, the news to meet him was that her illness had assumed a dangerous form. Then, though her longing to see her boy once more might never be gratified, there should be no lack of effort on his part.

"Camp at Manitou to-night," said he to his veteran sergeant, and then spurred ahead to meet the transcontinental express, east-bound. Three days later, with one month's "leave," and permission to apply for extension in his pocket, just as his swift-speeding train was crossing the mighty span of the Mississippi and the last rays of the setting sun shone full on the flag above the gray towers of the arsenal,—just as a puff of white smoke leaped from among the trees at the water's edge and the beautiful emblem came fluttering slowly

down, a hand was laid upon his shoulder, recalling him to himself, and the fateful brown envelope of a telegram stood before his eyes. No need to open. He knew the end had come while the son she longed for was still far away.

* * * * * *

One soft summer evening, long weeks later, while the full moon, just climbing from the deep, sent its silvery sheen over leagues of dancing, sparkling waters, Bob Emslie turned from the sight of the great inland sea to where the sound of music and joyous voices rose from the vine-covered depths of a broad piazza. Hammocks hung among the trees about the grassy lawn. Tempered lights shone from the dormer windows of the second story, and peeped here and there through the foliage. The gateway stood invitingly open, yet Emslie hesitated. The shadow of a deep sorrow was upon him, and even in his loneliness he shrank from obtruding it on others. Yet had they not written "Come to us, Bob; come that we who love may comfort you"? How could he, with his sad face, break in upon that blithe home circle where merry chat and music

and, yes, the dance were reigning, for now the strains of one of Strauss's witcheries came floating on the air, and he could dimly see graceful, slender forms circling in the waltz. Slowly he approached, choosing a winding path through the shrubbery, familiar to him from a previous visit when Mac was keeping bachelor hall and May and the bairnies were doing Italy. It led to the side of the house and past a little arbor, "for whispering lovers made," and there, evidently, were the whispering lovers. He heard pleading, masculine tones. He heard soft, cooing response. He caught a glimpse of golden hair over, if not actually upon, the broad shoulder of a youth whose back was toward him, and hastening by, unwilling to interrupt so thrilling a moment, came in full view of the fair lady of the house just perching at the head of the steps. "Dot —Dot McAlister, where on earth are you?" she cried, and then came springing down into the flooding moonlight, for she had seen and, with outstretched hands, flew to greet him. "Bob—Bob! Dear old fellow! Welcome, welcome home!"

And at the words there was scurry from

within that pretty arbor. Its occupants had fled.

Five minutes later, while a tall, broad-shouldered youth in black Tuxedo looked jealously on, a vision of golden-haired loveliness, a blue-eyed, bonnie lassie, all radiant smiles, all frank, beaming welcome, sprang forward at sight of the big, soldierly looking man at her mother's side and, *coram publico,* threw her soft arms about his neck and kissing him heartily on the cheek, exclaimed, " My blessed Bob at last!"

That was in July, and who can tell why such a change had come before August was half gone that she would not kiss him at all? A wonderful fortnight was that Bob Emslie spent at The Cairns! Every day they boated, drove, sailed, rode, swam, cycled, tennised or saddled, all but golfed—that craze had not then seized suburban Chicago, and, so far from finding peace and rest and comfort, Bob Emslie's heart was ten times sorer than when he came. He had planned to spend three weeks with them, and before the first was fairly over had tried to go. His last meeting with Mrs. Mac and the children was nearly

four years before, when Dot was still a tall, slender slip of a girl, with much tumbling, tawny hair—and tomboy propensities. The next time he came East to see the mother, they had gone abroad for a second visit, Lady May insisting that Jess and the boys would never learn to speak a foreign tongue unless they learned among the natives. Two years later when they returned Jess was nearly as tall as her elder sister and, as Donald, Jr., put it, "much more stringy." Both boys were ready to fight and die for Dot, who almost bullied them, and as ready to torment the second, who ever yielded and cajoled, and now Jess was going on seventeen and beginning to have devotees of her own, against whom the "brithers twa" made war forthwith, so that little comfort had she in her lovers' sighings. But Dot ("Dot indeed," said Donald, savagely, "She's built more like an exclamation point!") Dot had developed into a tall and tearing beauty who handled racquet, oar, whip or rein with equal ease and sat a horse to Bob Emslie's unspeakable admiration.

Whereas the fellow she most affected as an escort, the big youth who stared so enviously

the night she welcomed Bob, a graduate of Yale who had been a famous oarsman in his day, was but a sorry sight in saddle, and she must have known it. Other girls there were, some older, some younger than McAlister's fair daughters, and not a few were gathered there that night of Bob's unexpected coming, but no one, said Bob, to himself, as he stood or rode and watched her day after day—not one to compare with her who long years before had nestled so confidingly in his arms,—who had "taken seizin'" of his crisp, curly hair and well nigh tugged his locks out by the roots. Just three nights after his coming were they laughing, a whole table full, over this incident, as Mac retold it, and May, Jr., seated beside her big Yale oarsman, blushed,—fairly blushed when little Angus, the ten-year-old torment of the clan, dared her to go and do it again. The mother saw it and her own heart gave sudden leap.

One lovely afternoon,—it was late in the second week of Emslie's visit,—the groom came round from the stables and said something was amiss with Norna, her favorite mare. "Then saddle Buccleugh," said Miss

McAlister, with quick decision, striking her skirt with her whip, a little red spot in each cheek the while, as she turned sharply into the house. Emslie, who had been seated in an easy lounging chair, close at hand, and who was ostentatiously studying the paper upside down as the groom appeared, arose and followed her, leaving the piazza vacant. Not five hundred yards away up the shore road a Derby hat was coming scalloping down along the fence line, its wearer gyrating at the trot. The oarsman was at least on time. Jess was still aloft adjusting her habit and peeping through the jalousies of the sunny side in search of young Slater and his cob, scheduled to arrive together at four o'clock. She had her own reasons for quitting the piazza when May came down ready for the ride. Mac was not due from the town office until after six. Mrs. Mac had driven out to make calls. The boys, for a wonder, were gone to visit friends. Dot, Jr., and Emslie must have had a *tête-a-tête* and it had telescoped into a tiff.

Emslie minced matters not at all. "Miss May," said he, "you're not going to ride Buccleugh, with no one but—"

"But Mr. Hadley? Surely Mr. Hadley has muscle enough, Captain Emslie, if that's what's needed should Buccleugh give trouble."

"I do not question his brawn. Such horses, however, have to be handled with—sense."

"And Mr. Hadley lacks sense as well as I?" said Miss M., provokingly. "Is it that that makes him like—me? You do not flatter, at least, Captain Emslie."

"I *don't* flatter, May," said he, very seriously, and looking straight into her flushed and petulant face. "It would be rank flattery to say that Mr. Hadley could ride, or that you knew how to ride Buccleugh. You don't. He's a dangerous horse, because he shies suddenly when at swift gait, then bolts, and—I beg you to think twice—"

"I have—and thrice, and shall ride Buccleugh just as I have ridden him before—"

"You never rode him with that bit, May, or with that escort."

"Then it's high time I learned, and—had you anything else to say, Captain Emslie?"

"Yes, this!" answered the soldier, stepping straight to her and taking both her hands,—long, slender members were they,—in his

strong grasp. "I am old enough to be your father and fool enough to have forgotten it, as you discovered to my sorrow, but I am not fool enough to let false pride stand between me and your life and safety, May. No one you love is here to speak, but for your father and mother I speak. If you love them—don't ride Buccleugh to-day."

"And disappoint Mr. Hadley, whom I promised?" And here the blue eyes came up one minute, flashing, then fell in spite of her pluck.

"What you have promised Mr. Hadley I do not know. Will you promise me not to ride that horse to-day?"

"No!"

"Then I shall follow you." And without another word Emslie dropped her hands and quit the room,—Hadley bustling in at the moment, big, jubilant, pervading, happy, wholesome and hearty. Then the horses were heard stamping at the door.

Don McAlister alighted from the suburban train that evening at the usual hour and looked among the waiting carriages for his own particular depot wagon, and it wasn't there.

"What's wrang wi' Duncan?" he asked himself, for Duncan was as is the clock. A neighbor gave him a lift, and together they drove lakeward, and then, turning south along the shore, found themselves presently at the fag end of a queer procession. A dead horse on a dray was rearmost. His own depot wagon, towing a blown and reeking steed, was just ahead, Duncan on the front seat driving at funeral pace, daughter May on the rear seat, supported by a stalwart arm—that of the Yale oarsman, who looked dazed and dejected.

"What's happened?" shouted Donald, as they hauled alongside.

"Buccleugh bolted!" gulped Hadley. "Miss May's shaken up—a good deal, I reckon. Emslie's gone for the doctor."

"It's my fault, Daddy!" wailed Miss May, with sudden burst of tears. "I've killed Buccleugh, and h-hurt h-h-h-h-him worse than —I am."

"Hurt *him!*" said Donald, obtusely. "Why, Bairnie, he's dead!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A glorious morning in late October had dawned on the Lancewood, and Bob Emslie, with a strange and deep emotion at heart, stood gazing over the once familiar scene. The sun was already peering over the eastward bluffs. The distant peaks of the Rockies, stripped of the snowy mantle worn earlier in the season, were peeping as of old through the rifts in the heights on the hither shore, only one grand, hoary patriarch showing streaks of white on his seamed and rugged front. The mist still rose as of yore in silvery billows, tipped with tints of pearl, from the silent, placid reaches of the stream. Here and there, in winding course, the waters babbled over stony beds and foamed and purled in miniature rapids, prattling of the bygone days. They, at least, had known no change, but where were the black herds of shaggy buffalo? —where the timid, graceful antelope?—where

the skulking coyote?—where the fierce Cheyenne? Down near the willows at the waters' edge, a fleecy flock was huddling away before two bounding, busy collie dogs. On the slopes of the opposite heights, in scattered groups and sheer content, by hundreds were sleek horned cattle browsing placidly. From half a dozen points in the middle distance tiny columns of smoke sailed straight to the sky, issuing, every one, from the chimney of ranch or farm building. Winding up the heights and disappearing over the ridge at the southwest, broader and better graded than in the days when Dan Cassidy drove cursing down the trail, or the Cheyennes sent the Denver stage, with its bogus escort, to lure Hone out to fancied rescue and to certain death, the road still seamed the swelling bluffs; but, where the little plains fort stood and so sturdily resisted the shock of charging foes, a group of cozy, cottagelike buildings had sprung up at the bank of the stream, and, despite the early hour, children were gleefully chasing through the friendly cottonwoods below. Oddest of all, in graceful, symmetrical curve, two glistening ribbons, nearly parallel

save where they disappeared in perspective, swung round the nearest bluff at the west, skirted the stream an hundred yards or so, then in equally graceful reverse, rounded a long bend, bore straight away down the peaceful valley and disappeared again behind a height long, level miles to the east. Close at hand a tall white shaft, with cyclopean eye of green and rigidly brandishing arm in red, sprang from the sod almost at the very spot where Corcoran kept his vigil and got the arrow to supplement the semi-official "lance." And here the glistening ribbons seemed to branch and sprout forth, for side by side ran others still, and there on one of these parallels stood a long, brownish yellow structure on massive, steel-tired wheels, six under each extremity,—a structure all windows at the sides and piazzas at the ends, the former hung within with silken shades and curtains, the latter roofed and sheltered, and enclosed with glistening balustrades.

Oddly enough, Bob Emslie seemed far more intent on this affair, standing all by itself in the slanting sunshine than in the scene of his famous fight long, long years ago. There is

something that will take even the stanchest soldier from the stirring memory of battle. It was so early that the occupants as a rule still seemed asleep. Yet Emslie could have sworn he saw, as he came striding over from the station, a tall, slender figure at the eastward door. It was a "palace car," a "parlor car," one of those peripatetic hostelries owned only by magnates of the great roads. It had been side-tracked from the Colorado Flyer during the hour before the dawn, and for the first time since their thrilling experience long years before, McAlister and his devoted wife were there to meet the man of all others, probably, of the little band of defenders to whom they most owed their lives and safety. Often as they had foregathered elsewhere, often as Mac had visited the spot, bringing his family with him, not until now, when Emslie happened to be at Denver, had this opportunity occurred. "We spend the day at the old site on the Lancewood. Meet us without fail," was the message that came to Emslie, and his heart answered eagerly.

The night express left Emslie at the little "depot" late the previous evening, and the

proudest man in Lancewood Valley received him as he stepped from the train,—Donovan, station master and erstwhile sergeant of Hone's old company of Foot. It was midnight before Donovan could let his guest retire to the little room prepared for him. What a talk they had! Of Hone, God bless him! lying in his soldier grave. Of Black Bill and Old Tennant, long since retired from the rolls. Of little Britton, killed after all in fierce battle with the Indians in the far Northwest. Of the chaplain and of Captain Craven. Very pleased was Donovan to hear of *their* well being. Then there was Terrier Quinn, and Corcoran and Sergeant Burrows—Burrows was a passenger conductor on the Western Division, married to a girl from Council Bluffs. "Oh, lots of the old crowd had their day on the Road," said Donovan. "McAlister never forgot 'em." Then there was "Kansas,"—and "Denver Dan." Donovan had heard that Kansas had been killed over at Carson Springs, and as for Dan, he had dropped out of people's memories. Yes, Donovan could have talked till dawn, but Emslie pulled away and sought his pillow, yet was up

and dressed and watching for the headlight of the huge Flyer long before that marvel of the Plains was due. Many a man has listened for the coming of the cars and strained his eyes for the first sight of the engine puffing into view, bringing with it the being of all others on the face of the earth whose presence could make Sahara a Paradise. That was Bob Emslie's plight as he watched and waited for the Flyer's coming and with it Dot, whom he had not set eyes on since the day of Buccleugh's final and fatal bolt.

An awful day was that! An imp of perversity seemed to have possessed the girl as, mounting her chafing, spirited, splendid steed and calling Hadley to follow, she rode swiftly for the gate. Emslie hurried to the stables, hurriedly saddled Mac's own easy-going ambler, amazing both the methodical Duncan and that placid quadruped, then mounted and spurred away in pursuit. They were already out of sight. Something—some inspiration—sent him by a short cut through the westward lanes to head them off should she lead, as she often did, to the home of a girl friend a mile back from shore. At sight of

him, emerging from the lane to the highway, Dot had whirled Buccleugh, already half frantic, short about and lashed him fiercely as he swerved. Then came a chase in dire earnest! Hadley was powerless to help. Emslie's horse would have been too slow, but in his blind rage Buccleugh bolted into deep sand at the lake shore, where, plunging furiously, he lost his lead, and in words of ringing command his fair rider heard the shout from the roadway above,—"Throw yourself off to the left!"

She had defied him at the start, but she obeyed him now, and fell without serious bruise in the soft, yielding sand, while Buccleugh, released, tore madly away, only to bring up with a crash at a stone coping wall beyond the first turn.

By the time Emslie reached The Cairns bringing the family doctor, Mrs. Mac had May in bed, and there lay that remorseful heroine through three weeks of a nervous fever, while the captain went back to his troop.

No! He had neither seen nor heard directly from her since that day, yet there had been a look in her blue eyes, as he picked her up in his one strong arm, that he had never forgotten.

"O Bob, what a brute I've been," was all she had time to say before Hadley came sputtering to join them. And even though Hadley it was who drove her safely home and sent her flowers every day for weeks thereafter, Emslie need not have gone, as he did go, dispirited and dejected. To think that he who had escaped, lo these many years, should have lost his heart and lowered his flag to this—the very baby girl he had time and again carried in his arms in the long years gone by! She would marry Hadley, of course, he reasoned. If she didn't she was a heartless flirt and would treat him some day as she had her Yale adorer. Better suffer now than suffer that, said Bob. But it was a solemn face he took back to the waiting troop when once he got fairly away.

And now she was here—here at the Lancewood, within pistol shot of the site where, a laughing, cooing, crowing, unconscious, happy baby, she and those who loved her had been sheltered in the bosom of the earth and through days and nights of savage fighting had been watched and guarded until rescue came. Here, without Hadley, for in her letter

May senior distinctly said they were taking this run for the health of her precious child, who had only slowly been regaining strength. Jess was once more at Vassar for her last year. The boys were busy with their books and day school. Only Donald, Dot and herself were coming, so come *he* must!

Thinking of all this and lifting up his eyes he saw her standing in the radiance of the early sunshine, smiling at him from the platform of the palace car. Tall, slender and supple, only about her sweet blue eyes and the curves of her pretty, sensitive mouth did she resemble the May Brandon of the earlier generation. Nature in molding had given her the stature of her strong Scotch father, the soft white skin and fair, luxuriant hair of her mother, coupled with the willowy grace of the American girl, and despite the pallor of her lovely face, due to recent illness, she made a dainty picture at the platform rail in that gray traveling suit, a knot of blue under the round, white throat. The jaunty little gray hat, with its pert, tip-tilted feathers, sat becomingly upon her head. A sightly, buttoned boot adorned the slender foot peeping from

beneath the hem of her skirt. She had been looking dubiously downward, seeking a way to descend without shock, for the steps stood high above the slope of the low embankment and the porter had not yet appeared, but at sight of Emslie, her indecision vanished. "You have come to help me down, haven't you!" said she, with smiling confidence, hopping quickly to the lowermost step. Whether he had or not, it was obviously the thing for him to do, for her slender hands were stretching forth, palms downward, indicating that they were in search of support, and Emslie strode close to the steps, placed his strong hands at the rounded waist and swung her, light as a bird, to the ground, and there for a moment stood facing her as she smiled gratefully and in welcome up into his eyes, her hands still lingering where she had placed them on his broad shoulders. It made his heart beat hard, and he looked away instead of into her lovely face. There was danger and allurement unspeakable in the sight of that exquisite, rosy mouth with its snowy, faultless, even teeth,—in the blush of the soft cheek, the glamour of those beautiful blue eyes, ready

to plead for pardon or proclaim imperious sway, whichever her woman's intuition told would be of most effect. She saw at once that here was no abject and conquered slave. She realized that from the day of her disobedience and its resultant peril, she had lost grave share of the queendom in which she had exulted, and that her big soldier, her pride and boast from babyhood, her "blessed Bob" as she had ever called him, was no longer hers to either bully or cajole. In silence, but with a little flutter in her breast, she took his proffered arm. He led her a few yards over the level sod beyond the right of way, then stopped. "Where now, Dot?" asked he, gently, gravely. "You are not too strong, you know."

"Over yonder,—to the bank," she answered, with a nod of her head toward the clump of willows that stood along the stream and just beyond a little elongated mound, grass-grown —all that remained of the trench and dugouts of the siege. Evidently her occasional visits had served to keep the scene fresh in memory. Then, as he seemed grave and constrained, she began to prattle, eagerly, her color height-

ening, her eyes sometimes timidly seeking his, sometimes roaming over the rounded bluffs across the stream and up and down the dew-sparkling surface of the valley. What she noted was that, at least, they had it to themselves. Donovan and his people at the station still slept the sleep of the just and wearied. The children were far away. Except at the scattered ranches, she and Bob alone seemed alive to the fact that it was after five o'clock in the morning. To her impulsive, nervous words he listened silently, almost sadly, and presently halted on reaching the old, half filled trench, but she did not withdraw her hand from his arm. Glancing all about her, she gave it a little impatient tug. The spot where stood the relics was from several points open to view and stood high upon the bench. The clump of willows grew below in the bed of the Lancewood, and was far more secluded. A little pathway led thither and, letting go his arm, she sped lightly down, and then looking back with eyes that smiled and shone, held forth her hand. "Come, Bob, I—I want to ask you something."

So down he came, but not yet did she ask.

Not until they were beyond the willows and close to the still waters and shut off from the station and the settlement was she satisfied. Then, after one quick, birdlike glance about her, with a little gasp at first, but with such pretty pleading in the swimming blue eyes, she held forth both little hands, and with something very like tears in her voice, said, "Can't you forgive me, yet, Bob?"

And then fairly and fully the big strong soldier turned and looked upon her, in all her loveliness and penitence and pleading. Was it wonder that earth and stream and sky seemed turning round and round, revolving about that exquisite and dainty picture, standing there with outstretched hands, inviting, almost imploring? He *had* to say something! Even though he seemed choking he had to speak. The words came almost like a cry from his great, lonely heart.

"Forgive you for what, May? For breaking Buccleugh's neck and, almost, your own, —or for holding me there when you knew I should have gone?"

"For the first, Bob," she answered, shyly again, now that he could speak of what the

woman in her loved and craved to hear. "I *was* mean. But you—you had tried me so! You were so—just yourself at first—and then you grew—oh, so distant, and superior and—"

"I had no right there, May. You saw what was growing in my heart for you. You were no longer child, but woman."

"You thought you saw what you didn't see, Bob," and now her eyes were kindling and her little foot tapping away at the pebbly strand. "You thought you saw me in the arbor with —with—well, it wasn't '*me*'—and it wasn't —'*he*.' Jess told me."

"Mr. Hadley was your shadow, May, and far nearer your years, and—"

"Then he has more cause for reproach than you have," she answered, indignantly. "I did hold *him* because you—turned, and then —then—" And now just wrath at man's stupidity was giving place again to woman's wavering—"then—perhaps—I didn't know it all—until that day, Bob."

"The day you went home with your head on his shoulder?" asked he, half bitterly, for, big and little, men and soldiers are human, and he loved her passionately.

"My head may have gone with him, Bob. It was too bruised to know or care, but didn't you know where my heart went? O Bob, Bob!" And now the sweet eyes were brimming. There was piteous quiver and tremble about the pretty mouth, and, could he believe his senses?—she was stretching forth her arms to him—there in the glad sunshine of the Lancewood Valley, as she cried "Look about you, Bob! Think of all that happened here! You say I *held* you. Did you never hold me—*here,* Bob? Couldn't you—"

But further words were lost, for a moment anyway, for Dot and her swimming eyes and winsome face and outstretched arms were all on a sudden seized and clasped and gathered to his breast. The baby girl of bygone years had come again into her queendom. The scene of the desperate siege and struggle of the long ago had become the trysting place of lovers, and the murmur of the waters echoed the softly whispered "Yes," that, answering his eager question, fell like blessing on his listening ear.

* * * * *

"Aren't you two *ever* coming to breakfast?"

queried an aggrieved voice from somewhere along the bank, perhaps an hour—and probably two—thereafter; but in the arch and bonnie, blue-eyed face, that peered around the edge of the willows, there was no sign of disapprobation, and a conscience stricken pair arose and followed.

* * * * *

Just at sunset of that cloudless autumn day, there came whirling into view—and with prodigious 'scape of steam as it slackened speed and slowed down at the platform—that modern wonder on wheels, the "Rocky Mountain Limited" of the Great Rock Island Route—McAlister's pride and joy. Two minutes of delay in coupling and then, at the rear of its train, the private car rolled slowly, at first, away from the little platform,—Donovan, station master and ex-sergeant, standing at salute despite the fact that his broad face was wreathed in most unmilitary smile. A winsome, joyous little matron, round and plump as the partridge of her native state, waved blithe farewell and nestled a bit closer to her big, brainy, brawny Scot,

possibly to give more room to another couple at the nickeled rail—Emslie, straight and soldierly, with such a world of new-found bliss fairly beaming from his fine, clear-cut, commanding face, and Dot, so slender, symmetrical and willowy, with a beauty exquisite in feature and in coloring, clinging to his side and gazing out with brimming eyes over the scene of their fiercest peril and their sweetest joy. Then at last, as with gathering speed, in long, graceful curve, the train whirled out of sight beyond the shoulder of the sun-tipped bluff, just as the rearmost platform disappeared, she uplifted her radiant face to the fond eyes feasting on her loveliness, and stole her little hand in his. For a moment the rumble of the massive wheels echoed among the heights, growing fainter and fainter on the evening air, then all was still, and twilight settled down upon the Way of the West.

FINIS.

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